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<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/145>

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LITERACY BY SUBSCRIPTION: WRITING INSTRUCTION IN TURN-OF-THE-  
CENTURY AMERICAN PERIODICALS

By

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B.A., Grand Valley State University  
M.A., University of Louisville

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2012

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 2, 2012

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to especially thank Carol Mattingly, the director of this dissertation, for all of the insight, knowledge, and moral support she provided throughout this project; I could not have been written this without her. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, including Bronwyn Williams, Bruce Horner, and Marilyn Cooper, for all their help and responses, and Susan Ryan, for helping to inspire the idea in the first place.

ABSTRACT  
LITERACY BY SUBSCRIPTION: WRITING INSTRUCTION IN TURN-OF-THE-  
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Alicia Brazeau

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This dissertation examines popular periodicals in the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America as pivotal artifacts in the history of literacy education. It first reviews current histories of literacy, writing instruction, and magazines at the turn of the century, and then concentrates on the formation, circulation, and function of agricultural journals and of two women's periodicals, *Harper's Bazar* and *The Ladies' Home Journal*, between 1880 and 1910. In analyzing this collection of periodicals, this dissertation outlines both how magazines provided audiences with explicit instruction in reading and writing practices, and how editors and readers constructed unique, contextually-specific, definitions of advanced literacy. Finally, this dissertation argues that periodicals not only illustrate a collection of literacy practices and pedagogies vital to expanding our understanding of how people have engaged questions of literacy in different historical contexts, but also that popular magazines offered readers identities to assume in their reading and writing experiences.

Following the introduction which surveys the scholarship on literacy history and argues for the importance of magazines in this history, the dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters each examine *Harper's Bazar*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, and the agricultural publications, respectively. Chapters Two and

Three concentrate on how these two different, but influential, women's magazines deployed two separate conceptions of literacy, with *Harper's Bazar* framing ideal literacy practices as part of the communal learning present in women's clubs, and with *Ladies' Home Journal* urging its readers to see themselves as critical buyers and sellers in a literary marketplace. Next, Chapter Four examines how farm magazines articulated an imperative for farmers to contribute to the press in advancing agriculture as a profession and defined good writing as a forum for education. Finally, the conclusion integrates the previous discussions of both the women's and agricultural journals to demonstrate how all of these popular publications articulated literacy identities for their audiences that granted writers authority as mentors in their textual communities and emphasized the value of readers' contributions.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION  
LITERACY BY SUBSCRIPTION

In 1900, 238 thousand persons were enrolled in college courses in the United States. Three years later, in 1903, a single magazine, *The Ladies' Home Journal* could claim one million subscribers and even more readers. At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the midst of a literacy crisis that has received a great deal of attention from literacy scholars such as Graff and Gordon and Gordon, and at the same time that required composition courses were first being incorporated at institutions like Harvard, Yale, and University of Michigan, there is this incontrovertible fact: far, far more persons were reading magazines than were sitting in college composition classrooms. Despite this, however, our histories of literacy and composition in the United States have almost wholly ignored popular periodicals and their place in the literate lives of such a large population. If, as compositionists, we accept that at least one of our fundamental disciplinary goals is to understand and historicize the ways that people have learned to write and enter into a community of readers, then we must also critically consider the limits we have placed on historical study and the populations we have documented. The vast majority of the histories of composition and rhetorical studies have focused quite exclusively on academic institutions and English and Composition Departments in



particular, despite repeated arguments suggesting the value of widening our historical purview (Gere, Miller, Gold).

Such a sustained focus on upper-level institutional education has meant that histories of composition, especially those covering the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have limited themselves to an incredibly small and homogenous percentage of the U.S. population. Likewise, more general histories of literacy, while considering larger populations as well as education at the primary and secondary level, have tended to restrict their studies to census reports, schools, and tax and employment documents. In *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City*, Harvey Graff stresses that his numerical approach allows him to provide the necessary empirical basis to properly understand qualitative discussions of literacy history. In *Literacy in America: Historic Journey and Contemporary Solutions*, Edward E. Gordon and Elaine H. Gordon likewise draw from a wide range of materials, linking numerical data with autobiographical materials to consider the place of reading in the lives of individuals. In this way, both Graff and Gordon and Gordon use their histories to move beyond institutional ideologies, common myths about literacy, and strictly numerical records to gain a better understanding of what actual 19<sup>th</sup>-century persons were doing with literate skills, or the lack of them. Although many newspapers and periodicals at this time certainly continued to propagate what Graff has called the “literacy myth,” they represent a complex site of study in that they offered multiple perspectives on literacy and, more importantly, articulate their own definitions of literacy for their readers. Regardless of the kinds of books they frequently attempted to convince readers they ought to be reading, the popularity of the magazines themselves is evidence of what 19<sup>th</sup>-century

Americans truly were reading, and as such they remain important artifacts of the literate lives of a wide population. While valuable, histories concentrating on university texts and pedagogies, and other institutional academic sites, need to be joined by complementary and contradictory histories of other sites of literacy learning – sites that tell the story of readers and writers not included in the college classroom.

This is not to suggest that scholars have wholly ignored the history of literacy and rhetorical learning in non-academic settings; to the contrary, in “Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition,” Anne Ruggles Gere argues that composition historians should extend beyond the academy and professional settings to incorporate the diverse contexts where literacy learning happens. Work such as that done by Gere (1997), Susan Miller (1998), and Shirley Wilson Logan (2008) all embrace this call and touch on “everyday” sites of literacy education in late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America. Histories such as these offer new perspectives on the cultural, local literacy practices that shaped the lives of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Americans. My project joins discussions on the “extracurriculum” of composition at the turn of the century by examining popular magazines as sites of literacy instruction. Periodicals are an especially useful tool for study because of their incredible popularity at this time; thanks to improvements in publication technology and cheap postage, periodicals circulated widely, and in many cases were a more easily attainable and affordable reading source than books. They were, more importantly, popular in all parts of the country – not just in major Eastern cities – and were able to reach audiences that had little to no access to the higher education addressed in histories of the composition classroom. Indeed, memoirs written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by rural teachers such as Irene Hardy, teachers in

impoverished and isolated communities such as Mary Stone and Katherine Petit, and missionary teachers at reservation schools such as Gertrude Golden all note how much they had valued magazines in their own homes and how eager their students were for greater access to popular magazines.<sup>1</sup> Here, teachers and students suggest that periodicals were commonly viewed as both a form of entertainment, and a tool of literacy learning – one that extended or supplemented formal education. A survey of periodical archives for this time period demonstrates that this idea is reinforced in the journals themselves, which make frequent reference to readers’ self-improvement and study, and, as I shall explore in the following chapters, where the editor engages in explicit literacy instruction with correspondents.

### *Literacy and Education at the Turn of the Century*

Throughout these chapters, I will be concerned not only with how popular magazines connect with the understanding of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century composition education visible in our current histories, but also with how these magazines responded to a perceived literacy crisis and a corresponding national preoccupation with education. In the first column of the “Home Study” department that ran in *Harper’s Bazar*,<sup>2</sup> for instance, E.B. Cutting outlines the value of education in general and the goals of the “home study club” in particular. Urging readers to begin forming local groups and inviting readers already belonging to established clubs to correspond with the periodical, Cutting makes clear that the purpose of the department is to establish a fellowship of students in the “realm of books.” In surveying possible study topics, Cutting’s proposal

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<sup>1</sup> In *Quare Women’s Journals*, Stone and Pettit discuss their efforts to establish a settlement school in the Kentucky mountains, commenting on how popular and useful magazines were for the communities they served. Similarly, in *An Ohio Schoolmistress*, Hardy notes the importance of magazines in her students and her own literacy development, as does Golden in *Red Moon Called Me*.

<sup>2</sup> *Harper’s Bazar* did not adopt its contemporary spelling, *Harper’s Bazaar*, until 1929.

suggests that education, self-directed or otherwise, has patriotic and social consequences, that it leads to self-improvement (personal and literate), and that it is a social activity that forms connections among women – Christian, middle-class women, by implication. The educational paradigm outlined in this initial prospectus echoes the primary goals that appear in dominant 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century narratives of literacy and education. These narratives, as numerous literacy scholars have pointed out, often relied on assumed connections among literacy, moral and civic virtue, and social mobility. Literacy education was as much about adopting the values and habits that the student would need to participate in a middle-class, capitalistic culture as it was about the acquisition of reading and writing skills – or, rather, the belief that skill in the latter enhanced the former.

As histories such as Graff's, Gordon and Gordon's, and Jessica Enoch's examine, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were marked by a national preoccupation with literacy and education. Like literacy crises at any historical moment, this one emerged inextricably linked to social, political, moral, and economic concerns. In *Literacy in America*, Gordon and Gordon consider the attitudinal shift prompting turn-of-the-century Americans to consider basic literacy as necessary in their personal lives and for the livelihood of their communities. Gordon and Gordon attribute the appearance of this particular perspective on literacy to increased immigration, industrialization, and urbanization (263). The immigration boom at this time – it is estimated that over 28,000,000 immigrants arrived between 1880 and 1930 – meant that cities, especially eastern cities, faced not only larger populations, but also changing ethnic and linguistic demographics. Basic education in literacy was perceived

by many political and educational leaders as the best way to help members of these new urban populations assimilate. Correspondingly, leaders cast the cultural threat posed by foreign populations as a crisis of illiteracy. It is important to note that while late nineteenth-century narratives and propaganda draw a connection between the “problem” of immigration and low rates of literacy, such a connection is not necessarily supported by evidence. Graff notes how literacy histories have commonly focused on the association made between rising immigration and fears for literacy, but uses an empirical approach to assert that “despite common notions that many immigrants to North America were the dregs of their societies of origin and were rooted in cultures of poverty, we shall see that their levels of literacy were well above average for those places” (xviii).

Graff likewise warns that the connections made between industrialization and literacy need to be considered carefully. Business and political leaders at this time certainly advocated literate education for the new industrial workforce as a means of instilling the virtues and habits required in an economy of mass production. Horace Mann, among others, argued that basic education taught discipline, hard work, punctuality, and respect for authority. In the *Fifth Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education* (1841), Mann seeks to offer evidence for the argument that education leads to clean, moral workers, as well as assert that literacy education benefitted workers themselves in the form of wage increases. Both Graff and Gordon and Gordon, however, make equally clear that Mann’s perspective, while common, was far from universal. Business leaders continued to worry that education could also foster feelings of resentment among the working class for their current social order and radical social and political awareness. Moreover, Graff makes clear that working class perspectives also

revealed an “awareness of the contradictions of educational promotion and programs” that assumed a direct and unambiguous connection between increased literacy and personal economic welfare (212). Nonetheless, this perspective that literacy was the key towards economic security and advancement for individuals, and was consequently vital to the financial and social welfare of the larger community, remained predominant throughout the progressive era.

Because basic education was seen as a fundamental element of social (and economic) mobility, instruction in literacy needed to be carried out carefully. If, as many 19<sup>th</sup>-century discourses on literacy suggest, literacy acquired independently of proper instruction and supervision posed a potential social and political threat (Graff, “Literacy Myth at Thirty”), then it was important that education seek to inculcate in students the right (white, pan-Protestant) moral and social values. Teachers, therefore, as Graff discusses, but is also pointed to by Nan Johnson in *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America*, David Wallace Adams in *Education for Extinction*, and Jessica Enoch in *Refiguring Rhetorical Education*, were required to be models of Christian, middle-class attitudes and values, and were responsible for their instillation and restraint in young students. As an 1863 article, “The Training of Teachers for Indian Schools,” states so succinctly: “the teacher is the maker and protector of civilization” (Dyke, 696). Even outside of discussions of education at the primary and secondary levels, however, the goals for basic literacy instruction stressed the overall good of the nation (Graff, Enoch). In a wide range of popular periodical articles at the time, illiteracy was consistently linked with crime, poverty, and immorality. Although critiquing the unequal opportunities for education in the southern states, a contributor to *The Ohio Farmer* in the

“Current Comment” column of 1901, nevertheless articulates mainstream fears that illiterate voters would be detrimental to local and national governments: “the ballot in the hands of an ignorant, depraved people is a dangerous power. The only safety in a republican form of government lies in the intelligence and virtue of the voters. The state should require the ability to read and write and then provide the opportunity to every man to secure the education” (350). This kind of discourse was neither uncommon, nor linked solely to African Americans; applied by turns to immigrants, Native Americans, and impoverished communities generally, the connection among morality, social stability, and literacy appears frequently. These moral and social goals are clearly visible in pedagogies governing reading in particular, where it was argued that a course of reading taught time management, mental discipline, the development of sensitivity to a text’s aesthetic and didactic features, and that reading aloud was connected with religious performance (Carr, Carr, and Schultz).

This moral perspective on literacy, moreover, worked to bolster the growing common school movement through the middle and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This movement, which began primarily in New England states and was promoted by educationalists such as Horace Mann, joined with discussion on illiteracy to assert that government-funded, public schools would provide the foundation for a moral, stable workforce. These supporters, as Graff examines, “stressed schooling for social stability and the assertion of appropriate hegemonic functions . . . this view emphasized aggregate social goals – the reduction of crime and disorder, the instillation of proper moral values and codes of conduct, and, to a more limited extent, increased economic productivity” (22). Tax-supported, mandatory public schooling slowly came into being as each state individually

passed compulsory education laws. By 1918, all states had officially agreed upon such laws, but the extent to which they were enforced varied greatly. Graff suggests that most real opposition to the common school movement was over by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. However, despite the fact that legally mandated public schools existed in all states by early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the requirements set by these schools were not uniform, attendance fluctuated, and overall enrollment did not increase between 1880 and 1890. As Gordon and Gordon make clear, at the turn of the century, “for the nation as a whole, there were profound disparities in the schooling that was actually available to any given American . . . [and] there were significant regional differences in attitudes toward literacy education and establishing schools. Further, there were major racial, ethnic, and religious disparities in access to literacy and schooling and in what the schools were designed to accomplish for their students” (263). For writers such as the contributor to *Ohio Farmer*, such educational disparities along racial and ethnic lines only reinforced anxieties about immigrant and African American voters in southern states and eastern cities. For the farming periodicals, in particular, the resolution to such anxieties involved promoting better access to education. As compulsory education laws were more regularly enforced in the early decades of the twentieth century, attendance and enrollment steadily increased, and the national literacy rate rose as well according to U.S. Census records.

It is important to note, however, that changes in the rates of literacy listed in the national census are complex and governed as much by an actual increase in the percentage of the population able to read and write, as by changes in the way that literacy is tested and what counts as literacy. Graff indicates that early census records relied on self-identification and asked heads of households how many adults could read and write



their name, while later records also included the literacy of children. Moreover, what counts as literacy and the meanings that are attached to literacy vary by individual and change over time. Graff argues that:

the meaning of literacy in mid-nineteenth century urban society can only be understood in context; it can be established neither arbitrarily nor abstractly nor uniformly for all members of the population. It cannot be determined realistically without reference to the structures of demands, needs, and uses for literacy skills, which themselves vary and change (292).

The definitions for literacy visible in popular magazines at the turn of the century, and the understanding of literacy, therefore, that I shall use through these chapters, fall in line with other dominant, institutional discourses casting literacy as a moral and economic imperative, and as a corollary to Christian, middle-class work and social habits. Indeed, as such a predominant part of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century print culture, magazines were, in many respects, responsible for the continued promotion of such attitudes toward literacy.

While it is impossible to know the specific contexts of actual readers, equally important for my consideration is the contexts the magazines themselves envisioned for the subscribers. In particular, however, I shall make clear how periodicals constructed their own definitions of literacy for their audiences. Here, what counted as advanced literacy required that readers have the skills to participate in a community of readers and writers outlined by the magazine itself, and that they use literacy practices both to reinforce social relationships and to promote basic and advanced literacy in others.

### *Schools, Literacy, and Periodicals*

While popular women's and farming magazines certainly catered to a mainstream audience and may not, at first glance, seem a likely place for considering writing instruction, they were, nonetheless, among the primary fixtures in the literate lives of

turn-of-the-century Americans and were a resource to which many would have had access. The content of these magazines ranged widely, as today, but religiously-oriented publications, children's magazines, women's magazines, literary periodicals, and farming magazines and newspapers were among the most popular. As is still true, popular magazines brought together multiple goals: educating and informing readers on diverse topics (ranging from household products, reading habits, to social and moral debates), entertaining readers, and appealing to readers as consumers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the two latter goals dominated the former, but most magazines still retained a didactic intent, though not necessarily a part of every department or section. It is obvious, in particular, in the women's and farming magazines I investigate that readers and editors are preoccupied with education and literacy; discussions of the schooling of readers' children, the possibility (or lack thereof) of a college education for their readers, and the resulting need for readers to acquire literacy skills not learned in school fill the pages of many popular publications, in particular *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *Harper's Bazar*, and farm journals. For these magazines, the content and availability of formal education is linked to the literacy practices editors argue their reading audiences need to acquire through interaction with their magazines. Specifically, these magazines argue that their audiences need to learn a new set of literacy practices advocated by the magazine because such skills are not taught in schools, but are nonetheless important in the lives of their readers.

Given that the particular kind of magazines I investigate wanted to create publications that would seamlessly reflect the experiences of their audiences and also to build an intimate relationship among readers, it is not surprising that editors should spend

so much time discussing literacy and education – issues they could easily assume were important to readers. In their histories of periodical culture, Helen Damon-Moore and Mary Ellen Zuckerman acknowledge a general trend on the part of editors to establish a personal, embodied relationship with readers. Indeed, at the turn of the century, it became increasingly necessary for editors to build close relationships with readers to ensure the magazines' popularity (Edward Bok, editor of *Journal* sent readers photographs of himself); Damon-Moore attributes this trend, in part, to Bok's strategy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Attempting to connect with a reading audience composed of women, presumed to be wives and mothers, editors concentrated on issues governing the schooling of children and the possibility of a college education for daughters. They likewise debated the value of college education for young women who would, as Bok continuously made clear, likely not pursue a career outside the home.<sup>3</sup> However, mainstream periodicals such as the women's and farming magazines on which I concentrate do more than just reproduce and expand discussions of what education should entail for rural children, young women, and men invested in agriculture; they also situated such discussions within the context of the magazine's specific values and interests – and, by implication, the interests and values editors' illustrate are specific to the audience community.

Although a great deal of scholarship has been devoted to exploring 19<sup>th</sup>-century magazines and their immense popularity, of all the periodicals I will be examining in the following chapters, only *The Ladies' Home Journal* has received sustained scholarly

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<sup>3</sup> "At Home with the Editor" in the January 1894 issue along with the August 1903 article, "College and the Stove," extensively outline Bok's beliefs on women's higher education. In both these discussions, Bok supports his claim that college training, for women, needs to include lessons in the domestic sciences and concludes that "we do not want our daughters to be encyclopedias, but true, womanly women" ("At Home" 1894).

attention. Scanlon in *Inarticulate Longings* and Thompson in *Education for Ladies: 1830 to 1860* both examine 19<sup>th</sup>-century women's magazines and their contribution to discourse on gender, social roles, and, for Thompson, education. Thompson examines the common arguments about women's education that appeared in periodicals during these years, asserting overall that popular magazines reflected the conflicting attitudes already present in mainstream culture toward women's proper sphere and educational goals and opportunities. Thompson's discussion is valuable in its recognition of a range of attitudes; however, Thompson's perspective treats these texts as "reflections" of culture only, and does not consider how magazine print culture (and individual contributors and reader-correspondents) *participated* in the formation, addition, promotion, and revision of the narratives governing education in general and literacy in particular. Although she is concerned with *Godey's Lady's Book*, which was published earlier in the century, rather than *Ladies' Home Journal*, Nicole Tonkovich also gives a great deal of critical attention to education and popular periodicals. In her discussion of the editor, Sarah Hale, Tonkovich illustrates how Hale promoted education for women, making clear, however, that education was to be adapted to the female gender. This perspective is equally visible in *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Harper's Bazar* where editors articulate how advanced education may be useful – or not – to their female readers. The article "Unfortunate Education" (1886), for instance, "take[s] as a given that all should get an education" no matter their circumstances, but argues also that "it would seem wise that education should be adapted to one's necessities" (590). Focused more on the lives of women who have attended college, Grace W. Soper's "Occupations of Women College Graduates" (1888) also emphasizes how education must be situated in the

student's circumstances. Soper acknowledges with relief that most college graduates marry and further suggests that college learning can be good training for marriage because:

by this time the young woman has attained a cool judgment, and is guarded by a training which restrains her from unadvised matrimonial measures . . . as no suggestion of divorce and only one separation between husband and wife was noticed in the collection of statistics of the association, the result of happy marriages is one of the best features of the higher education of women (18).

In this same theme, Soper makes clear that a higher education, in addition to allowing women to take on teaching jobs, primarily, and enter other professions if they choose, can train women to better help their professional husbands: "society receives a double benefit when the scientist or professional man is assisted by a wife who adds to the zeal of a loving woman the well-trained powers of the student" (18). In this way, as I will explore in the following chapters, journals are careful to connect their discussions of formal education with, as in the *Bazar*, considerations of how education may help women participate in women's clubs and, as in the *Journal*, with the periodical's class-based perspective of its audience as middle-class consumers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "A College Girl's Experience as a Wife" (1905) assures readers that after graduating she has found fulfillment in running a home and, moreover, that higher education prepared her to be the wife of a like-minded, civically-interested husband. She addresses reader questions: "don't you find your mind becoming atrophied with your monotonous housework?" Her solution, however, is overtly class-based: she hired a washerwoman, accepted a post as head of the domestic science department "at a leading university," and then hired more students to also help her at home. Katherine Rioch, in "The College Bred Woman in her Home" (1899), arrives at the same conclusion as the "College Girl"; she acknowledges that it might be difficult to transition from college to the home, but assures readers that "the most serious difficulty in this new work is likely to arise from the lack of competent servants who can relieve the young housekeeper of care, and even of drudgery" (14). Both Rioch and "College Girl" make clear, too, that in fact higher education is necessary for a middle-class homemaker to possess, an ideal supported by the periodical as a whole with its emphasis on discussing and offering advice on the skills necessary to instruct children at home and supplement faulty school education. Beyond advising her readers to hire "competent servants" to spare them from drudgery, Rioch also makes clear that college educated women are better equipped for domestic affairs than their uneducated counterparts: "her quick intelligence will constantly suggest easier methods, more skillful tools, economy of time, as also economy of strength" (14). "College Girl" makes

At the same time, farm journals also articulated their concern over the schooling available for children in rural communities and the ability of agricultural colleges to prepare young men for farming. Changes in agricultural technology and a growing movement, visible in farm granges and farm journals, to advance farming as a scientific profession contributed to what Frank Luther Mott, in *A History of American Magazines*, discusses as the “farmer’s movement of the 1870s” (148). The Grange movement, which began in 1867 with the organization of the Patrons of Husbandry, grew by 1873 to represent 5,000 granges with 300,000 members (149). Farm periodicals grew along with granges, and doggedly promoted grange meetings, work, and ideals, urging readers to view their granges as not only professional organizations, but also as educational institutions. When farm editors consider education, then, they not only center their articles on local common schools and state-funded universities and agricultural colleges, but also analyze how the funding, subjects, and pedagogical methods of these institutions prepare students to enter agricultural communities and participate in non-academic educational sites such as granges and agricultural journals. Rose-Marie Weber finds a similar connection between discussions of educational content and its applicability to farm life in “Even in the Midst of Work: Reading Among Turn-of-the-Century Farmers’ Wives,” her exploration of some of the first university extension courses in the 1890’s. Weber asserts that documents that outlined the literacy practices of women’s reading courses also “present an elaborated perspective on the value of reading and the ways its benefits could be enacted in rural settings. This perspective is in turn embedded in a

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the same point: that critical thinking skills honed in the college classroom will allow women to approach domestic work intellectually and become, like her, “an authority on it in [the] community” (42).

national policy to keep agriculture viable and make farming a more rational and satisfying way of life” (293).

In connecting discussions of schooling to the goals editors insist readers must attach to that education, magazines articulate for their reading audience the value of education and literacy in their lives and, more significantly, begin to suggest that formal education alone is inadequate.

In “The Education of Our Boys” (1884), the writer argues for the value of agricultural colleges over traditional universities, claiming:

it is strange that farmers do not appreciate the superior advantages of a college course arranged and a college equipped especially for their benefit. It is high time farmers declare their independence of the tyranny of the old courses of study. Our sons can be better educated, and at less cost of time and money, at the agricultural or technological colleges, than at the universities, where scientific courses are esteemed inferior to the classical (1).

He echoes other farm journals in insisting that farmers now need to be able to write for grange work and farm publications, and further argues that practical experience is the best preparation for such writing:

in the expressive, concise language of these orations, we have proof that the accuracy of thought and expression, which must be exercised in every day’s work, in the laboratory and class-room and work on the farm, lead to as elegant and forcible use of language as can be acquired by the old classical courses, which have long been claimed as essentials to good writing and forcible oratory (1).

The idea that agricultural work experience inspires the most valuable contributions to farm magazines recurs throughout farming publications, and connects with more overt critiques of the literacy education offered in schools.

Thus, while the women’s magazines and farm periodicals under consideration here all present different perspectives on higher education for their readers, they are alike

in their contention that formal schooling has failed to offer their audiences instruction in the kinds of literacy practices the magazines themselves wish to promote. In an article simply titled, “Writing” (1881), James M. Taylor laments that schools spend a great deal of time on composition: “from childhood up through years in the school-room it is practiced almost daily. And yet how few there are who can express their ideas on paper correctly!” (302). Both the women’s and the farm magazines feature articles on letter-writing, tailoring their instruction to particular situations and purposes they imagine their readers face, hinting that students do not spend enough time learning to compose the kinds of letters they will send as adults. Taylor is even more direct; he argues, in agreement with the overall tenor of other farm journals, that current pedagogies are to blame:

the fault lies in the failure to make their knowledge practical. Teaching others to parse and analyze is not teaching to write the English language correctly. Experience proves this . . . . In like manner there are any number of our best grammarians, if thorough knowledge of the technicalities of that branch as now generally taught is a test, who would feel bewildered if required to write a notice tens lines in length for publication (302).

As I analyze more deeply in Chapter Four, for Taylor and other writers in farm periodicals, the ability to participate in grange work and compose publishable agricultural articles is the mark of true literacy for farming professionals. In their history of the growth of the common schools, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States*, Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens review attendance data, focusing specifically on rural parts of Ohio, to assert that “teachers were willing to classify their students as literate by the time they enrolled in grammar, and this tells us that students were generally classified as literate by the time they were twelve to fourteen years of



age” (113). For *The Ohio Farmer*, however, and indeed all the farming periodicals and women’s magazines, what would count as literacy for their readers could not be defined by enrollment in grammar or by attaining a certain number of years in school. In fact, farm journals such as *Ohio* advertised the fact that “some of our valued practical writers had few early opportunities in the way of education” (“King’s English – Once More,” 130). As I will devote much of the later chapters to exploring, magazines articulated their own definitions of literacy as it applied to their designated audiences, and outlined a set of literacy practices. What is important to my discussion here, however, is that magazines offered instruction in particular literacy habits to their readers precisely because they did not believe that time spent in academic institutions provided students with these kinds of literacy practices. Farm journals and two of the most popular women’s periodicals – the *Bazar* and the *Journal* – sought to supplement the writing instruction offered in schools by teaching readers new practices that editors argued were meaningful in readers’ lives. In doing so, they not only questioned the primacy of schools as the most important educational institutions, they also created and promoted new constructions of advanced literacy.

### *Literacy Learning by Subscription*

In the chapters that follow, then, I trace readers’ and editors’ treatments of literacy in popular periodicals, illustrating how magazines moved beyond general discussions of reading and writing in order to prompt readers to participate in new literacy constructions. These periodicals sought to outline the form, practices, and values of advanced literacy in their audience communities, and not only provided instruction in reading and writing techniques, but also offered readers opportunities for participation in

the literacy experiences advertised by editors. I focus specifically on *Harper's Bazar* and *The Ladies' Home Journal* as examples both of exceptionally popular women's magazines and of magazines that catered to two somewhat different populations of American women, one presumed to be younger, more urban and affluent, and the other more domestic and, according to its editor, quintessentially middle-class. The *Journal* is especially useful in that in addition to having a vast circulation – Edward Bok calculated that one in six people in the United States were *Journal* readers during his editorship – the magazine was also influential in terms of editorial style and marketing strategy. I also consider a number of farm periodicals, publications which strove to remain specific to their local state communities, but which collectively represented a type of magazine growing in popularity at the turn of the century. Three magazines that I emphasize most, *Michigan Farmer*, *Ohio Farmer*, and *Maine Farmer* were state-specific magazines, and are important in that they remained successful longer than most agricultural periodicals.<sup>5</sup> These publications, unlike the *Bazar* and the *Journal*, were aimed at a family audience, but more pointedly targeted men in rural communities; given that 40% of U.S. citizens lived on farms at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the audiences of farm journals represent an important and under-studied population of readers. In fact, while much work has been done in exploring the social, commercial, and gender values of women's magazines in general and *The Ladies' Home Journal* in particular, women's periodicals, as well, have been largely overlooked as sites of literacy learning. The interactive features of both *Harpers' Bazar* and *Ladies Home Journal*, that is the "Home Study Club," the correspondence columns, and "Just Among Ourselves" have not received much critical attention either. More importantly, farming magazines have not been

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<sup>5</sup> *Michigan Farmer* continues to be published today.

studied at all in the context of composition and literacy. Given their popularity at this time and the fact that they were designed to be used as teaching tools in the home, popular publications such as the *Journal*, the *Bazar*, and farm journals provide an important contribution to any discussion of popular turn-of-the-century magazines and literacy.

Chapters Two and Three concentrate on the nationally circulating women's journals, demonstrating how the *Bazar* and the *Journal*, despite the fact that their editors asserted they were writing for all American women, deployed two distinct illustrations of literacy values for communities of women and two very different definitions of advanced literacy. Chapter Two explores the *Bazar*'s relationship with the women's club movement, and argues that editors introduced readers into the literacy practices of these clubs through features such as "The Home Study Club." Ultimately, the *Bazar* urges its readers to adopt habits of reading and writing that emphasize communal relationships among women, and prompts readers to assume the role of a mentor or contributor to a club community. Turning to the *Journal*, Chapter Three outlines how the editor, Edward Bok, cast women as consumers and sellers of literacy. I consider the roles the magazine takes both in helping women become critical reader-consumers, and in teaching readers the necessary practices of writing for publication. Demonstrating that the magazine encouraged women to understand literacy in distinctly economic terms, but also taught them to be critical of their buying and selling choices, I assert that the *Journal*, like the *Bazar*, afforded readers positions of authority.

Farm journals, the subject of Chapter Four, were even more insistent on the authority possessed by their readers in their agricultural writing. In this chapter, I

examine the imperative articulated by farm publications for farmers to contribute articles to the agricultural press, so that they could more fully participate in the formation of agriculture as a scientific profession. While pulling from a collection of farm journals, I center my argument on two in particular, *The Ohio Farmer* and *The Maine Farmer*, that, in addition to celebrating reader contributions and arguing for the value of writing produced by farmers, offered readers more explicit instruction in writing than other periodicals. Arguing that advanced literacy was not defined by mechanical correctness, but by the ability of a writer to convey intelligent and clear ideas, these publications guided readers into textual roles as mentors in a community of professionals.

Comparing the differing roles editors prompt readers and writers to adopt in the *Bazar*, the *Journal*, and farm periodicals, Chapter Five concludes by asserting that each of these magazines constructs a literacy identity for readers to assume in their reading and writing. I consider how editors work to connect their illustration of the social, professional, and class identity of the audience in general with a set of life-style specific reading and writing practices. I ultimately argue that these magazines construct their definitions of literacy around the roles they imagine readers will need to assume as writers, persuading readers that magazine-approved definitions and identities will be meaningful in their communities.

Likewise, throughout these chapters, I am working from an understanding of literacy practices as social constructions, as representing a set of domain-specific ways of reading and writing. Scholarship such as that of Barton and Hamilton (2000), Swales (1990), Ivanic (1998) and Gee (1990) articulates an understanding of literacy that focuses on participants' learning, negotiating, and revising particular reading and writing

practices within discourse communities. Barton and Hamilton, in particular, concentrate on the social and ideological significance of domain-specific literacy practices, asserting that considering literacy from the perspectives of practices “offers a powerful way of conceptualizing the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (7). All of these scholars, then, argue for the importance of critically analyzing the connection between literacy practices and the values, social relationships, and power structures that accompany them. Throughout my consideration of the *Bazar*, the *Journal*, and the farm magazines, then, I examine how practices recommended by editors connect to larger social ideals and relationships magazines wished to promote. In Chapters Two and Three, especially, editors’ sense of audience obviously engaged questions of gender and class. *The Ladies Home Journal* and *Harper’s Bazar* were part of a publishing industry that increasingly catered to white, middle-class, female consumers, as Lee Joliffe notes in her discussion of 19<sup>th</sup>-century women’s magazines. As popular and influential publications, these magazines both created and reinforced gender norms and conceptions of domesticity. In addition to their gender-specific notions of audience, all of these magazines believed that they were speaking to a specific class of readers and consequently constructed vivid illustrations of the beliefs, values, experiences, and resources of such an audience. In my considerations of identity and literacy, central to Chapter Four, and throughout my discussion of editors’ illustrations of their readers, I am drawing additionally on the conception of social class and cultural capital articulated by Pierre Bourdieu; I am not concerned with the actual economic make-up of the audience,

but with editors' constructions of the tastes, values, and power relationships of the presumed audience community.

Additionally, in considering the multiple goals and practices visible in both the women's and farming magazines, my approach will be to consider them using Deborah Brandt's conception of sponsors of literacy. A great deal of recent contemporary and historical literacy work focuses on specific "sites of literacy" – both institutional and extra-institutional places where individuals take part in literacy events. At the same time, Brandt in *Literacy in American Lives* works equally from the perspective that people build up and practice literacy through participation with others in specific contexts. In particular, she puts forth the idea of literacy sponsors – agents that can be real or abstract who support, restrict, enable, and shape literacy. Brandt sees these sponsors as "delivery systems" of ideologies of literacy and that they also help to illustrate the range of relationships and influences that are present at scenes of literacy. Both of these theoretical approaches to literacy and space – that point both to sponsors and local sites of literacy – make clear that while it is important to consider literacy in terms of larger cultural, ideological constructs, it is equally important to consider how these constructs work in conjunction with the goals and conditions of the individuals taking part in the literacy practice. Moreover, because the individuals participating in the magazines included in this project are not all equally represented in the text of the magazine itself – editors are obviously more vocal in their discussions of the literacy goals and habits of the magazine, but these publications also feature the writing of contributors and readers submitting letters to correspondence columns – I treat these texts as sites of textual and ideological hybridity. In their examination of 19<sup>th</sup>-century composition textbooks, Carr,

Carr, and Schultz argue that such texts cannot be read as a single-author document or understood as presenting a monolithic ideological perspective. Rather, they maintain that composition textbooks need to be seen as complex hybrids that make use of multiple forms, sources, influences, and practices, and as hybrids, were also meant to be used in multiple, even divergent, ways. I would argue that popular magazines in general, and certainly the collection on which I will concentrate, are hybrids as well. Although put together by a single editor with a specific vision for the magazine as a whole, the individual articles, departments, and advertisements vary in tone, agenda, and at times socio-political stance. Thus, my reading will focus on each magazine as a hybrid, as a place that blends mass culture with home life, that simultaneously values domestic, popular, and academic learning, and that negotiates multiple goals, ideologies, and practices at once.

Although she is not focused on theorizing contemporary understandings of literacy, Catherine Hobbs, in her introduction to *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write*, offers a way of reading historical literacy practices that focuses on participants acting within specific literate domains or communities. Specifically, she makes clear that in investigating the diverse spaces in which women participated in reading and writing, she is not concerned with literacy as defined by “only the technical skills of reading and writing but the tactical – or rhetorical – knowledge of how to employ those skills in the context of one or more communities” (I). Hobbs proposes instead the term “effective literacy” to describe the work done by the subjects of her collection, defining it as “a level of literacy that enables the user to act to effect change, in her own life and in society” (I). For Hobbs, this might mean that women, such as Sojourner Truth, who

lacked “technical skills of reading and writing” but nonetheless possessed a rhetorical presence, could be effectively literate. The men and women who interacted with *Harper’s*, the *Journal*, and the farming magazines – however much they might have worried about grammar mistakes or insufficient schooling – were certainly schooled in the basic technical skills of writing; nonetheless, Hobbs’ concept of effective literacy is useful because of the emphasis placed upon users’ ability to connect with a community and to perceive a purpose for their writing. Ultimately, all of these magazines are concerned with specific experiences of reading and writing, and are seeking to help their readers participate in a community, whether it is a club or a profession. The magazines I examine are ultimately concerned with how effectively their readers are expressing themselves in writing – and for *Harper’s* and farming magazines especially, this concern springs from the editors’ insistence that readers become contributors to their own communities. More importantly, however, while it is only possible to guess at the kinds of goals actual magazine readers might have established for themselves, editors’ conceptions of both a purpose and community for the writing of their reading audience is visible throughout their discussions of literacy and education – and forms the basis for editors’ attempts to persuade readers to adopt certain literate strategies.

Popular periodicals, then, represent a site that in some ways is disconnected from the traditional purview of historical composition work – and offer the possibility, as Gere contends in looking at women’s clubs, of considering a relationship between the university and “outside” culture that can disrupt professionalization narratives and expand what counts as a site of composition education and illuminate how pedagogy is enacted when there is no present “teacher.” In this, they can expand disciplinary histories



of what has influenced the field's ideologies and pedagogies; they can also expand our sense of how institutional practices and values have circulated outside the academy and among different populations, and inform our understanding of literacy and how to engage it.

## CHAPTER II

### JOINING THE CLUB: CLUBWOMEN, MAGAZINE READERS, AND SCHOLARS

In her autobiography, Margaret Sangster, editor of *Harper's Bazar* from 1889-1899, notes that even in its early years the fashion magazine “had a pervasive literary flavour from the first to the last page” (207). Although *Harper's Bazar*,<sup>6</sup> founded in 1867, was predominantly a fashion magazine aimed at upper and upper-middle class readers interested in European fashion, the periodical always had literary roots. The original publishers, Harper and Brothers, also founded the popular *Harper's Magazine* and HarperCollins Publishing. Nonetheless, Sangster, according to her own account, was reluctant to become editor of a fashion magazine because her skills and interests focused on “the other departments.” Both in her autobiography and in her advice book for women, *Winsome Womanhood* (1900), she demonstrates her commitment to the women's club movement, home study and reading, and women's increasing participation in community and workplace affairs. In fact, the greater part of her chapter on “The Life of an Editor” is focused not on her own experiences but on acquainting readers with publishing houses and the value of female editors. Making note of an address she gave to a women's club at Smith College, Sangster claims that “no vocation alluring to women possessed wider opportunities and richer rewards than [journalism]” (279). In the pages that follow, she makes an argument for how satisfying the job can be, ultimately

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<sup>6</sup> *Harper's Bazar* did not change its name to *Harper's Bazaar* until 1929.

suggesting that women especially need to take a more active role in the publication of magazines. She observes that “it is noteworthy that the magazines intended for home reading, and presumably read by women to a greater extent than by men, are at present edited and engineered by men” (282). In her book and other articles, too, Sangster makes clear her conviction that women of all ages should seek out intellectual pursuits. The goals of such endeavors, according to Sangster, are personal improvement and pleasure, but also social betterment. A strong advocate of women’s clubs, Sangster makes clear in her writing that women need to form connections with one another in order to educate themselves and to influence their homes and communities.

Her beliefs, not surprisingly, echo the agenda visible in *Harper’s Bazar* at the turn of the century. The feature she put in place in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely the “Home Study Club” column, were continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Elizabeth Jordan, a writer and suffragist. The pedagogical agenda forwarded by the magazine under Sangster and Jordan drew on models used by women’s clubs, specifically women’s study clubs, promoting a gendered understanding of literacy that was acquired and enacted socially; for the *Bazar*, as for women’s clubs, advanced reading and writing skills were best learned and practiced in a community of family members and/or women. In fact, in addition to numerous articles supporting women’s clubs and a regular column, “Club Women and Club Work,” that reported on the activities of clubs across the country, nearly all discussions of the literacy skills readers should acquire centered on the reading and writing practices used in women’s clubs. Although individual articles concerning education and letter-writing were by no means uniform, together with the “Home Study Club,” “Club Women and Club Work,” and “Our Girls’ Exchange” they

imagined a distinct place for advanced literacy in the lives of their readers. Specifically, they asserted that women, beyond school years, needed to take part in advanced literate practices in order to enter into a community of women and exert a positive influence their families and communities. In the spaces where editors offered clear advice on reading and writing habits, in the “Home Study Club” and the various articles on letter-writing, in particular, *Harper’s Bazar* promoted a pedagogy centered on collaboration, critical reflection, awareness of an audience-community – strategies the “Home Study Club” identified as being inherent in club work. In the sections that follow, I will first explore *Harper’s Bazar*’s campaign for social literacy practices beyond schools years, before turning to the magazine’s relationship with women’s clubs and how this connection informs the specific reading and writing advice offered in its pages.

*“Gathered in Cheerful Groups”: Advocating Literacy Beyond the Classroom*

Despite the fact that the period between 1890 and 1910 incorporates two separate editors for *Harper’s Bazar* and any critical consideration of the magazine as a whole must take into account not only the articles and features centered on literacy, but also the advertisements, fashion notices, and myriad other columns, the stance *Harper’s Bazar* takes on literacy and women’s education during this period is remarkably homogenous, and appears surprisingly frequently.<sup>7</sup> Even the fashion plates regularly offer lengthy discussions of the current designs for school girls, for college students, and for clubwomen. Repeatedly, articles and columns stress the fact that all (female) readers can and should embrace advanced learning; that readers will need to develop their writing

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<sup>7</sup> As was common in magazines at the time, quite a number of the articles have no listed author, making it difficult to know how many writers are contributing to the larger discussion on education. It is possible that some of these articles were written by Sangster or Jordan themselves, which may partially explain the continuity of ideology.

skills, their experience discussing literature, and knowledge of history, culture, and current events beyond what was provided in school. These articles suggest that this out-of-school learning is necessary because, for women especially, education needs to be suited to their specific situation in life. According to the *Bazar* this means that their female readers need to embrace literacy practices that are inherently social, that emphasize shared reading and discussions of texts. It is equally obvious in all discussions of education and literacy that the *Bazar* imagines an audience composed of middle and upper-middle class women who have been well-educated, though they may not have had the opportunity to pursue education beyond the secondary level. *Bazar* writers assume, then, as will be obvious in the sections that follow, that their readers have the leisure time and financial resources to pursue the study practices the magazine advocates – ideally with other women like themselves.

Although the *Bazar* certainly contains articles advocating and discussing the *formal* education for children and young women, the magazine is equally clear that educational pursuits need to extend beyond the classroom, for women of all ages. This belief is in line with what Sangster advocates in *Winsome Womanhood*, where she urges young women to read often beyond what is required for school and, more pointedly, where she encourages older women to join club activities and pursue further learning. Sangster's perspective is echoed in articles such as "Busy Women's Reading," by Mary Baldwin, which appeared in the February 1898 issue, and offers advice to readers on self-cultivated reading habits on the belief that "the well-filled shelves of the public libraries, the multiplicity of magazines, the enlarged field of the newspapers – all these offer the woman of today the mean for mental cultivation unknown past ages" (164). Baldwin, in

agreement with other *Bazar* articles like “Reading for Pleasure,” implies throughout the article that the women reading the *Bazar* agree that the possibility of continued learning outside school, or beyond school-years, is something all women desire, even if they are unable to take advantage of it yet.

The perspective that past experiences in school have not provided readers with all of the literacy skills they need is equally visible in the numerous articles the *Bazar* offers on letter-writing. For instance, “Fashionable Letter Writing,” which offers practical advice on the current styles in business and social letters, begins with the belief that:

there are many points to be considered in the art of letter-writing, as it enters largely into the everyday life of most people, and yet after young ladies have left the school-room, and young gentlemen have left school or college, they are supposed to be above and beyond requiring instruction on this head, while in reality few have mastered little more than the rudiments (389).

The article proceeds to make two concepts clear: that school could not have prepared young writers for the new writing situations they will face as young adults, and that overcoming this deficiency requires conscious guidance and practice, such as that offered by the magazine itself. Accustomed, the writer imagines, with only writing letters to their parents, “it is when girls merging into womanhood and boys into manhood, even more than if after-years, that want of fluency in letter-writing is acutely felt by them . . . . [and] to commence a letter to a comparative stranger, or to a person with whom the writer is but slightly acquainted, on any matter of interest, is the first difficulty to be got over” (389). Because many “are conscious of their deficiencies” but inclined to avoid rather than address the skills needed for writing letters, “Fashionable Letter Writing,” like other advice-driven articles such as “The Business Letter” and “The Endings of Letters,” offers to fill the gap.

Although the “Home Study Club” column, as I will explore in the sections that follow, assumes that readers will regularly be writing papers for club work or reflections for their own benefit, *Harper’s Bazar* as a whole offers advice on only one form of composition: letters. A variety of articles present readers with advice on formatting and paper styles, and general discussions of appropriate content for business, social, and personal letters. In addition to being distinctly classist, however, *Bazar’s* treatment of letter-writing emphasizes how letters enter into women’s social lives; thus, a diverse range of articles recommend that writers spend more time reflecting on the content of their letters and that they consider the relationships they are building with others in their writing. Even more than they offer *Bazar* readers advice in actually writing letters, numerous articles insist that readers understand that the ability to write appropriate and eloquent letters is a social imperative. An article simply titled “Letters,” for instance, claims that “friendship implies courtesy as well, and demands the visible signs of fondness and faithfulness. As a mere matter of good breeding, the writing of letters should be made an essential part of our various codes of behavior” (354). At the same time, in “The Laws of Letter Writing,” Priscilla Leonard asserts simply that “every woman needs to know how to express herself suitably in social correspondence” (1126). Leonard, throughout her article, attributes this need largely to impression management, assuring readers that they “can more safely neglect the laws of conversation, for here voice and eyes and gesture supply the deficiencies of our language, and express things without much need of words. But when we must commit our fortunes to a written page, to be read, perhaps at an unpropitious moment, hundreds of miles away, it behooves us to

know how to make that written page say what we would, and make the exact impression we desire" (1125).

Numerous articles lament that women, faced with "the horrors of composition day," have become too hasty in their writing practices; although the collection of articles I examine were each written by different writers, they each encouraged the same method of improvement: that writers spend more time reflecting on what they are saying. In fact, in an early issue of "Our Girls," Margaret Hamilton Welch broadly recommends that readers "think a moment of the things you want to say, tell them as briefly as possible in a way that you think will interest your friend, and presto! Before you know it composition day will have lost its horrors!" (A80). Welch tailors this advice more specifically to improving the content of letters, offering an example of an over-long letter written in an "exaggerated style," and advising readers that:

one of the best ways to improve letter writing for a girl of this age is to cultivate her powers of observation and pass on to her friend the impressions she has received . . . try to tell her of the things that are happening to you, even the simple matters, in a pleasant lively way that shall yet skip such exaggerated expressions as 'what on earth,' 'under the sun,' 'hopping mad,' and the like (A80-81).

Articles like "The Laws of Letter-Writing," "Letters – Written and Received," and "On Letter Writing" give even more specific examples of the types of information and content that should be included in letters of invitation, condolence, and congratulations, but likewise continue to urge readers to spend time considering the practical value of the content of their letters. Leonard offers an example of a "young woman wishes to write a business letter, and has no experience[:] the laws she must apply are three – clearness, promptness, and brevity" and then recommends that readers achieve brevity and clearness by writing an initial draft, and then condensing it, before re-copying the whole (1125).



"Letter-Writing" makes clear that critical reflection is not only important for formal social letters, but for more personal letters as well, arguing that "ordinary letter-writers are too apt to trust exclusively to the epistle they have received from the correspondent whom they are addressing for suggestions of what to write about," and, with both women writing letters that only respond to the previous letter, "a long correspondence thus often becomes a perpetual circle of wearisome repetition, where the writers lose their separate individuality and become one" (282).

Perhaps even more important for writers, according to the *Bazar*, than spending time reflecting on content, is time spent considering audience, a practice that requires the writer to think about the personality of and her relationship to a letter's recipient. In "Points in Letter-Writing," the author claims that "one of the fine arts in letter-writing . . . is to conform your style of writing perfectly to the person whom you address. Many things must be considered. The age, the degree of intelligence, the social position, and the amount of familiarity you have with your correspondent are only a few of the points" (646). Isobel M. Taylor, in "Letters – Written and Received," similarly maintains that "in addressing a letter the character of the correspondent should be studied so that each will receive what he will most enjoy" (810). Taylor further articulates, however, how audience consideration may influence choices in material issues such as paper type and penmanship, stating that "the golden rule of 'doing to others as you would that they should do to you' would revolutionize the penmanship of many, and the patience would make perfect work in some, if all letters were easily read" (810). Offering even more thorough advice in mechanical and material concerns in letter writing, including providing readers with pictorial examples of hand-written letters and the differing borders

on mourning cards, "On Letter Writing" advises that writers confine themselves to standard conventions both to make it easier for busy readers to understand their meaning and to retain control of the impression they give their audience, asserting that "form or conventionality is the oil which makes the social machinery run smooth. Therefore one must either understand its usage or, by ignoring it, run the risk of being misunderstood" (800).

It is obvious throughout the *Bazar's* treatment of letter-writing that they wish to emphasize for readers the importance of understanding how the letters they compose are a part of the ongoing relationship they are constructing with their audience, the letter's recipient. In this respect, the way *Bazar* writers such as Taylor frame their letter-writing instruction merges into the belief expressed elsewhere in the magazine that literacy practices beyond the schoolroom are important for advancing a community of women (physically or abstractly as a community of readers). Published in the March 1890 edition, "Reading for Pleasure" vaguely argues for the value of reading literature, but, more overtly, offers a romanticized description of the home life of book lovers. Importantly, while the article describes the pleasures of books themselves – "delicious bits of word-painting, in stories that beguile the tedium of today and obliterate yesterday's pain, the wide world teems with wealth for the genuine lover of books" (230) – it frames much of the value of sustained reading in the social value it has in the family and among the community. For families that read often, for instance, "the vocabulary of such a household derives constant reinforcements of the picturesque from allusions which are the coin current in the family talk, and the very children in the nursery grow familiar with people who never walked the earth" (290). The article acknowledges that reading is

usually a solitary activity, but points to the value of sharing reading experiences beyond the family circle, claiming that “gathered in cheerful groups the land over” women share their reading, “all receiving much more from the frank interchange of opinions and the free discussion awakened than any one of the group could gain were the reading carried on alone” (290).

Although the magazine’s discussions of education often touches on men and women, and different classes, the articles that focus more on reading, letter-writing, and other out-of-school literacy practices, such as “Reading for Pleasure,” tend to concentrate on middle-class women and the social value of literacy activities. This is visible again in a February 1898 reflection on reading, “The Busy Woman’s Reading” by Mary Baldwin. Here, Baldwin acknowledges that “the busy woman has her limitations, and this fact makes it necessary for her to use wise discrimination in her plan for self-improvement,” but further notes that trying to read and study on her own is not a wise time-saver (164). She argues instead that:

if she really gets filled with the subject, and if she has a generous make-up and a proper diffusiveness of temperament, she must give out of what she has received [from reading], and must find it impossible to conceal the impressions made upon her by getting into the atmosphere of great minds; and if she makes no mistake in choosing one to share her enjoyment of a writer, she must receive in return something that will help her in one way or another to read to a greater advantage in the future (164-5).

Baldwin is quick to point out that reading the “proper” texts – those recognized by “a leader of thought” – is important, but here it is also true that, in addition to the pleasure derived from shared reading, women can (and should) also share their reading experiences with others, and thereby help one another improve their literate development. More importantly, the socially driven reading and reflection practices Baldwin advocates

here, and that are generally supported by the *Bazar*'s treatment of literacy, fits in well with the magazine's overwhelming support of women's clubs at the turn of the century, and with the reading and writing practices recommended through columns like "Home Study Club," which blended club work and the pursuits of individual readers.

### *Harper's Bazar and Women's Clubs*

Ultimately, the goal of the editors of *Harper's Bazar* was not simply to urge women to consider the importance of education and the social implications of letter-writing; numerous articles and the correspondence columns are designed to promote and even model the work of women's clubs. If the *Bazar* is clear that readers should pursue literate and intellectual work beyond school, it is equally adamant that the best method of doing so is to adopt the practices of women's clubs. To this end, the magazine not only features numerous articles discussing and advocating the club movement, it also contains columns dedicated to club work: "Club Women and Club Work" which reports on club news and the activities and syllabi of individual clubs, "The Home Study Club" which introduces women into the pedagogies of club study, and "Our Girls' Exchange" which encourages young readers to construct a textual community based on the values of women's clubs. Through these features, the *Bazar* is not simply acting as a spokeswoman for the club movement, but rather is introducing a national audience to women's clubs and their literacy practices, shaping the way women, perhaps not already involved in clubs, perceive the movement and its pedagogies, and ultimately, I would argue, influencing the club movement itself by modeling strategies readers will take with them. In the section that follows, I will outline the *Bazar*'s portrayal of the values and goals of established women's clubs, and its promotion of a *Bazar*-approved collection of

practices through “Club Women and Club Work.” Late in the chapter, then, I will turn to the magazine’s efforts to teach readers how to adopt the reading and writing habits of women’s clubs, interrogating the social and collaborative definition of literacy put forth in “Home Study Club” and “Our Girls’ Exchange.”

The “women’s club movement” that began roughly in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and continued into the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century encompassed a vast range of people, practices, and organizations. Both Anne Ruggles Gere, in *Intimate Practices*, and Theodora Penny Martin, in *The Sound of Their Own Voices*, attest to how predominant and influential clubs were in the lives of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century women and American culture at large, but the content and aims of these organizations cannot be fairly represented by a single group. As Margaret Hamilton Welch reflects frequently in her regular column in *Harper’s Bazar*, “Club Women and Club Work,” a club may consist of a few country women coming together to read literature, or have a large urban membership with women participating in multiple separate departments, each focused on different interests, studies, and social causes. While Gere’s history, which addresses the club work of a diverse range of participants, including African American and working class women, focuses on the literacy practices that formed the foundation for interaction within any club, it is equally true that not all clubs claimed study as their primary purpose. Nonetheless, for many women’s clubs, study – whether of literature, history, or items of cultural and communal interest – was both a reason for formation and a serious endeavor. Martin designates such clubs as “study clubs,” and contends that in these clubs “which filled the gaps between society’s formal institutions and the informal needs of individual women, members developed – along with the stirrings of intellectual independence – an

awareness of and confidence in themselves,” allowing them to expand cultural understandings of women’s sphere (3). While both Gere and Martin offer extensive histories of the club movement based on their investigation of myriad club-related documents such as syllabi and club papers, they do not give much attention to the club movement in popular magazines, or turn to the treatment of club work in *Harper’s Bazar*. In particular, the *Bazar* sought to address and refute popular arguments against the growth of women’s clubs, and to convince readers of the value of joining clubwomen by illustrating the primary practices and goals of clubs.

Reactions against women’s clubs, which were summarized in the *Bazar*, centered on the belief that they promoted liberal political and social agendas, and were a platform for women’s rights – a perspective to which the editor of *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, Edward Bok, firmly adhered.<sup>8</sup> While many clubs featured in the *Bazar* articulated distinct social agendas and a commitment to being involved in the community, these goals were certainly not always liberal or suffragist.<sup>9</sup> In addition to its regular series, “Club Women and Club Work” headed by Welch, that offered news of clubs around the country and information about the General Federation of Woman’s Clubs gatherings, the *Bazar* also ran articles discussing the importance of the movement as a whole. One such article, “The Significance of the Women’s Club Movement,” by Nettie Bailey, outlines

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<sup>8</sup> In his autobiography, Bok discusses his criticism of clubs and the subsequent *Journal* article written by President Cleveland that supported his view; when a club published a statement of their resolution to boycott the *Journal*, Bok attempted to bring a lawsuit against them. He later admits that even when he turned from “destructive” to “constructive” criticism of club methods, “they were too angry with him even to admit that his suggestions were practical and in order.”

<sup>9</sup> Looking to clubs more focused on literary and academic pursuits, Martin asserts, moreover, that they often held conservative goals and sought to reassure the opposition by avoiding controversial and political topics (34). Although she is more concerned with the literate work of clubs, Gere, opposingly, finds more alternative and even transgressive practices even among the study and literature clubs, noting how women expanded the boundaries of what counted as literature and how it was to be studied, using club work at times to inspire activism in the community.

how common women's clubs have become, "a permanent factor in our civilization," and addresses the positive influence woman's clubs have had on women personally and on their communities. Bailey traces the origination of woman's clubs to the turn civilization took when "the race began to understand that there was a more just and satisfactory way of settling differences than by fighting . . . . when arbitration took root in the race mind," arguing that at this point women were able to be useful outside the home "and all unconsciously the woman's college and the woman's club came to give them the necessary training to take their part in the work of the world" (204). Although Bailey is clear that women's sphere is still separate from men's, and makes no mention of women's involvement in political matters, she puts forth a lengthy argument for the necessity of the education women undertake in clubs, claiming that women, the new "leisure class," have the time to do education work "along ethical lines" so that they might take part in solving social problems; in fact, "women must do the studying, the investigating, the detail work [in these matters] for which men have not the time, and leave them to do the executing" (204). Here, and in Welch's writing, club advocates simultaneously push at the boundaries of what may be considered women's work and at the same time reinforce a conservative gender divide. Nonetheless, Bailey echoes the overall perspective of *Harper's Bazar* in attesting to the social and communal outreach of the study club: "the woman's club of each town or city should be the centre from which should radiate such an influence as would stimulate the community to higher thinking and living" (207).

But protests against the woman's club movement were not simply restricted to their social agenda; criticism also surrounded the education practices promoted in these

organizations. One article in the *Bazar*, for instance, takes up the fact that “a protest is coming from various quarters that club women are taking themselves too seriously” (“Club Women’s Seriousness,” 1112). Opponents like Edward Bok feared that club work and study would distract women from needs of the family at home, and in their scholarly interrogation of the movement, Martin and Gere also similarly note the condescending manner in which academics viewed the efforts of club women. The clubs advertised in the *Bazar*, however, continued to attest to the seriousness their educational agenda, arguing that the subjects club members studied would interest and benefit their families and local communities. In later portions of her article, “Significance of the Women’s Club Movement,” Bailey asserted that the education afforded by women’s clubs was both fundamental to the movement and ultimately something that would benefit all society, claiming that “there is no educational factor in this country to-day of greater significance or which give to women, and therefore to the race, a broader education than does the woman’s club” (204). Similarly, “Club Women and Club Work” also attested to how seriously clubwomen believed in their educational programs, as was visible both in Welch’s commentary on the club movement and on her reports of various clubs. In each issue, Welch offers an overview of at least one club, from somewhere in the country; in praising what is admirable in the featured club, Welch draws attention to what is or should be valued in club work, and among these values is rigorous intellectual activity. Praising The Phalo Club of New York, for instance, Welch makes clear that the “membership is made up of deep students and serious scholarly thinkers. Every topic is considered from a philosophic point of view and with full conception of its widest use” (Oct 1897, 820).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> At the same time, however, the discourses of professionalism increasingly used by academics depreciated



Although the specific educational and writing-oriented activities of individual clubs varied as greatly as the organizations themselves, the programs reproduced and club discussions included in *Harper's Bazar* argue for a collection of widespread tendencies. Namely, Welch and other article writers in the magazine suggested that while women's study clubs frequently appropriated the language and book lists of colleges, they also valued a more social, democratic structure. The extent to which clubs copied and appropriated the words and structure of the academy seems to connect with their desire to legitimize their own educational endeavors. Clubs, for instance, commonly referred to their study and meeting schedules as "syllabi," and, although schedules varied, the *Bazar* consistently refers to a commonly recognized beginning and end to the "club year" that loosely coincided with the school year; Welch makes note in her column of the fact that "the days of 'first meetings' are just upon the world of club women – the reassembling after the summer separation" (Oct 1897, 819). Cataloguing the documents of clubs around the country, Martin similarly notes that the club year generally ran from September through May, like college semesters, and that, moreover, "in addition to the academic discipline of regularly scheduled class meetings, required attendance, and assignments to be completed at home, clubs adopted many of the trappings of women's colleges" (68). Agreeing with the work seen in the *Bazar*, both Martin and Gere assert that club syllabi, which, though addressing a broad range of topics often centered on literature, also relied on the authority of college book lists and, later, the bibliographies from university extension courses (Martin 101).

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the quality and seriousness of the study clubwomen undertook, denying it the authority attached to colleges; Gere sees this as systematic of English studies' moves toward disciplinarity, saying that "to professionalize English studies, then, would-be academics had to discredit clubwomen's literary projects in favor of their own; they stigmatized the literacy practices of women's clubs to enhance those of professors" (214).

Nonetheless, despite this reliance on some of the format of the formal academic institutions, “Club Women and Club Work” and, as I will address in the next section, “Home Study Club,” demonstrated that the educational practices of clubs necessarily moved past the academic model to better incorporate their commitment to community – both the community of the club itself and the community around them. Gere makes clear that women’s clubs operated with a definition of literacy that differed from those most commonly circulating at the time, maintaining that the practices promoted by clubs “encouraged a symmetry and synergy of active reading and ongoing writing development, [so that] clubwomen developed an ideology of literacy that emphasized participation rather than passive reception” (25). This concept of participation within a community of women is repeated often in the *Bazar*, both in articles such as Bailey’s discussion of the social significance of clubs and in Welch’s reviews of different clubs’ activities, where they continuously stress the strength of members’ connections with one another and the responsibility of each member to the others. Bailey asserts, too, the need for education to be based not simply in reading, but in acting: “we begin to feel that *real* education consists in doing as well as absorbing . . . . and have begun to understand that only by actually *doing* can we weave into our own mental structure that which we read and study, and so make our own the knowledge and experience of all times and people” (205, emphasis in original).

To this end, the clubs tailored the topics covered, reading materials, and meeting practices to suit the circumstances of individual club members. While the literature “approved” by the academy was common on club syllabi, the *Bazar* assures readers that clubs can also choose topics based upon the offerings of the local library and locally

important issues being covered currently in newspapers. And while, as Gere addresses, clubs produced a great deal of written materials in the way of programs, meeting minutes, and even published papers, the articles and columns of the *Bazar* emphasized the primacy of reading journals and papers read at club discussions.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it was in the preparation of these papers and arrangement of these discussions and reading schedules that *Harper's Bazar* intervened with the "Home Study Club" column; borrowing the values and practices ascribed to women's clubs in other parts of the magazine, the "Home Study Club," edited by E. B. Cutting, promoted continued out-of-school study and advanced literacy for readers by describing ideal reading and writing practices for readers. Teaching women to conduct club work and advance reading programs on their own, "Home Study Club," as I will demonstrate in the following section, forwarded a pedagogy of collaboration and reflection, urging readers to develop advanced reading and writing skills in a community of other readers.

*A Club of Readers: Teaching Advanced Reading Practices*

In the February 1908 edition of the magazine, in a brief note at the front of the issue entitled "With the Editor," Jordan previews the new and continuing features of *Harper's Bazar*. Pointing toward goals of self-improvement rather than fashion, she assures readers that:

There will be good literature in the Bazar goes without saying; that the practical domestic departments will be far-reaching in their helpfulness is equally assured. *The greatest strength of the Bazar, however, lies in the power to aid the development and culture of its readers.* Therefore, its famous and effective crusade the past year in behalf of improved speech among American women will be followed by the upbuilding of our Home

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<sup>11</sup> Describing the growth of clubs in 1892, Anna B. McHahan, of the Friends in Council club of Quincy, Illinois, asserted that "they gave us the habit of expressing ourselves on paper; they taught us not to fear the sound of our own voices; they made us acquainted with each other's mind and thoughts" (qtd in Martin, 92).

Study Club, plans for which are outlined in this number (2, emphasis mine).

The stated goal of “aid[ing] the development and culture of its readers” was already established in the numerous columns offering advice and information on books, language, cultural events, and manners. However, in the “Home Study Club,” the *Bazar* went beyond simply recommending titles and authors worth readers’ attention, and outlined for readers specific courses of study and methods of reading. The plans Jordan speaks of in vague terms are articulated more specifically by E. B. Cutting, the editor of the column, who sets herself up as an expert on the pedagogies of women’s clubs and a teacher for her readers.<sup>12</sup> In the article, “Women and Home Reading,” which serves as the first incarnation of the monthly “Home Study Club” column, Cutting explains that “Home Study” will function as a space where readers’ letters and requests for advice on study club plans and personal reading programs are published and answered. The magazine, which, in addition to articles on reading and education,<sup>13</sup> had long published a reading recommendation column, “Books and Readers,” had also, according to Cutting, been regularly inundated with letters requesting books to read and study advice. Identifying clubwomen, mothers “who were beginning to read aloud to their children,” and “the girl who is going to college [and] the girl who wants to go but is unable to do so” as her audience, Cutting indicates that the “Home Study Department” will “give advice in the matter of books to read, courses of study to follow, and [will] assist in every possible way those readers of the Bazar who are organizing home-study clubs, and are

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<sup>12</sup> No information is available on the identity of E.B. Cutting, in the magazine itself or elsewhere. Cutting’s knowledge of women’s clubs – their meetings and their study habits – however, is phrased in such a way as to suggest that it is drawn from personal experience. I am working, therefore, on the assumption that Cutting is a woman.

<sup>13</sup> Get percentage/idea of how much of magazine was devoted to literacy, etc. vs fashion.

seeking direction in the way to maintain them” (154). Cutting, in the discussion that follows, makes clear that the *Bazar* will be a resource for “busy women and girls who wished to study, but were too occupied to do so systematically,” outlining for readers how best to go about a self-study program and how to establish and manage a serious woman’s club or reading circle, making obvious that the latter is the preferred method of extra-institutional education for women. The department that develops out of this outline follows up on the goals Cutting identifies, setting itself up as an authority capable of instructing women on how to be scholars “at home.” In particular, as I will examine through the discussion and syllabi offered throughout several years of the column, Cutting emphasizes (and offers advice in) two distinct qualities of advanced readers: collaboration with other readers and critical reflection and discussion.

While Cutting’s proposal that the *Bazar* “act as a clearing-house for book and study information” and the format of the department as a space where readers can seek advice firmly establishes the magazine, by way of the “Study Club” editor, as an authority figure on pedagogy and literacy practices, it is equally true that this authority is even more overtly named by the readers themselves in their published letters. That Cutting sets the agenda for the kinds of letters that will get included and, consequently, the type of practices that will be held up as valuable is obvious; despite the fact that multiple letters are addressed in each column, Cutting unfailingly praises methods that she finds laudable and explains the value of subsequently recommended practices: “I think your agreement to read for a half hour a day is admirable, and you will find it adds greatly to meetings if you report on the volumes that have absorbed you during the week” (Sept. 1908, 913). Moreover, in addition to the fact that she obviously chooses which

letters will appear, she also at times admonishes writers for failing to include necessary information – like a return address, or the date when the club would like to start studying the mentioned topic – and also suggests where the writer may be unwise in choice of topic. For instance, in the December 1908 issue, a club explains that they want to study the history of literature, and Cutting replies that “your club is certainly ambitious and has undertaken a great deal of work, and I make the suggestion that you limit your study either to certain phases of literature in the countries of the world, or else that you take given periods in different countries, and study the various forms of literature as found in them at these times” (1272). In May 1910, Cutting is even more skeptical of a club’s study plan, and criticizes them, much like a teacher, on choosing too broad a subject: “you will not, I hope, mind when I say that I am sorry to see your club is planning to take up miscellaneous work, rather than to select a given subject and make a thorough study of it” (362).

In addition to these obvious places where Cutting signals her expertise in arranging programs of study and selecting texts, the letters of contributors themselves openly call on the column to stand in as an authority, often making note of or denying their own ability to make such determinations for themselves. One reader begins by admitting that “you will think our club rather sentimental, I fear, but we thought it would be interesting to have a biographical winter, and study the lives of various great men, and the influence their love affairs had upon them. But where and with whom shall we begin?”<sup>14</sup> (Sept. 1908, 913). In the very next issue, another writer begins by expressing her belief that “the outlines for club work you have given have seemed so helpful, I

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<sup>14</sup> Cutting assures them that their club “shows a fine sentiment” and will enjoy the reading, before suggesting they study Victor Hugo, Bismarck, and Robert Browning, and compare “how the master passion conquered a novelist, a statesman, and a poet” (913).

would like to know if you would give me a few ideas” and, later in the same column, another correspondent notes that “having read with interest the suggestions given to literary clubs for study, I take the liberty of asking help for our programme committee” (Oct. 1908, 1034). The strategy used here reappears throughout numerous issues: contributors begin by making note of how helpful the “Home Study Club” has been to readers in the past and even hinting at the quality of the texts selected by Cutting, before making requests for advice. Tellingly, too, contributors sometimes suggest that they have not made much effort to get this information for themselves or to put together their own topical program; some even rely on the *Bazar* to outline in detail the methods they should using in reading, discussing and writing about one literary text, so that they can use the model with other texts in the future. In October 1908, Cutting explains to a club focusing on French literature that “the outline for a study of Victor Hugo you can use as the model for the others, as well as the list of books of reference which I am sending you by mail” (1034). Similarly, for a group wishing to read Shakespeare Cutting specifies that:

The following outline will serve for your programme, and you will be able to assign to different members single topics which they will read papers upon at the meeting of the club. England in Shakespeare’s Time: (a) The historical setting; (b) The literary setting. 2. Stratford and Shakespeare’s surroundings: (a) Early life and school-days; (b) Marriage and London life; (c) Retirement and Stratford. 3. The Elizabethan Theatre: Read. *William Shakespeare*, George Brandes, Chapter XV. 4. “The Merchant of Venice”: (a) Sources of the Play; (b) Outline of the play – the main theme. 5. Study of the characters – Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock, Portia. Mark the scenes and lines which describe these characters. What impression do you get of Portia’s personal appearance? What are her chief characteristics? Give the scenes and lines. I have given the outline for one play, but this may be applied to any that you may read (Dec. 1908, 1271).

What is significant here is that, as both Martin and Gere note in their histories, part of what defined the literacy practices of women’s clubs (or any other extracurricular

group) is that they were pursuing an education without a formal instructor, or the kind of authority figure (or figures) that would be part of any institutional setting. The lack of such an institutional authority is what often marked the scholarly work clubwomen did as not legitimate. For this reason, according to Gere and Martin, clubwomen often “borrowed” the authority of schools by making use of school book lists and strategies from schools. Here, however, Cutting sets *Harper’s Bazar* up as having a similar legitimizing power, as one that exists in the popular rather than academic realm. More importantly, readers are encouraged to work collaboratively and become authorities for one another. Even as Cutting, rather like a teacher, marks out plans of study for interested readers, she then urges women, in their future study endeavors, to draw inspiration from their own discussions, from the proposed programs of other clubs, and from their own reading when deciding meeting agendas and strategies. This is not to suggest that the *Bazar* was wholly unique or intervened to solve a problem; far from it. In both the articles and in the “Home Study” column, the magazine does not put forth new literacy ideologies, but rather clearly draws on academic narratives and pedagogies. In the April 1909 issue, for instance, Cutting advises a reader intending to study French literature that “it is just possible that you might be able to obtain old examination papers from some of the colleges, but I rather doubt it. There is no reason, however, why you should not apply to the heads of the French department of any of the colleges and make your request. I should begin with Harvard” (426). Similarly, Cutting occasionally suggests readers look to the reading lists put out by colleges, and at times prompts readers to test their knowledge, as is the case of the woman pursuing French literature, by creating a card catalogue of bibliographic information for future quick reference. She



advises that readers “keep a card catalogue of the books you read, the publishers, authors, and editions being noted on each card. In this way you make a bibliography for yourself” (426). At the same time, however, Cutting reminds readers in nearly every issue (often more than once) that the “Home Study Club” is itself a scholarly resource for book references and study plans; over and over, Cutting’s responses remind recipients that “I shall be very glad to hear from time to time how your work progresses and also if there will be any way in which the Home Study Club can help you” and, more pointedly, that “the following outline of work which I send you I hope will be helpful, but if any questions arise which seem difficult, or if there is anything confusing about the outline, I shall be glad to give you explanations of it” (426; Mar. 09, 312). In this way, Cutting illustrates herself not only as an informational source, but also, through statements like those above and assurances that “I have outlined a sufficient amount work to keep your members busy for the meetings the rest of the year” (312), portrays herself as both a teacher and fellow club member. Readers acknowledge Cutting’s teacherly persona and their own use of “Home Study” as a scholarly resource regularly in their written requests for information. Letters printed in “Home Study” commonly refer to the fact that the writer has found advice helpful in the past, or has made use of the outlines printed in the column.

*Harper’s Bazar* was certainly not the only magazine or newspaper to include departments advising subscribers to read certain books or study certain subjects; as Cutting’s note in the original issue suggests, readers were – without the prompting of a designated “study” column – accustomed to seeking this kind of advice from popular magazines. What is different about the *Bazar* is the inclusion of a space for lengthy and

specific plans for reading, study, and composing; writers' casting of the *Bazar* as a tenable authority for academic study illustrates that the academy is not the only place turn-of-the-century women looked to for "genuine" literacy practices. *Harper's Bazar*, like other magazines, blended institutional beliefs on pedagogy and literature from the academy with the philosophies and goals of the women's club movement, texts and issues of interest circulating in popular culture, and, for many Americans, this hybrid source was important for shaping the literacy events and self-improvement plans practiced at home.

It is obvious, in particular, that, even as she makes use of a teacherly persona, Cutting is promoting the same reading pedagogies used by women's study clubs, a fact she makes no attempt to hide. The vast majority of the letters sent in to the "Home Study Club" are written by women working in clubs, and wanting advice for the course of reading, paper writing, and discussion they will pursue. The skills Cutting proposes her readers acquire, then, are rooted in the sense of communal discussion and work that defined women's clubs in general; specifically, she demonstrates to readers how they should adopt reading habits that emphasize collaboration with other readers and foster critical reflection and discussion with other learners. Indeed, Cutting makes clear that the column was established in part to help home readers maintain a systematic approach to reading and study, readers who "did not know how to best make use of" a library, or were "too occupied to [study] systematically," or "felt the limitations of the small places in which they lived, and knew no way in which to overcome these limitations" ("Women and Home Reading," 154). More pointedly, she notes that establishing outcomes is important: "there are a number of good habits to form in the matter of reading in an

appreciative way, which it might be well to make as a condition of membership in your clubs. You could agree among yourselves to devote so much time each day to good reading” (156). Readers take this advice to heart, often noting in their letters that they want to begin “systematic study of American literature” (Jan 1909, 102), or how much reading they have decided to accomplish each week, or the resources they have available and goals – “we prepare papers, not lectures and have a good library” (Oct 1908, 1034).

In turn, Cutting’s repeated response to requests for a “systematic study” is to advocate the complex division of material among members; she regularly reminds readers that the best method of approaching any study subject or course of reading is to work collaboratively. Therefore, the “Home Study Club” frequently advises women to divide (or even appoint a leader to divide) a broad subject area into smaller parts, represented by individual texts, among all members of the club. At times, Cutting offers lengthy lists not only of primary texts, but also reviews and secondary sources as well, noting how each member might select different texts and report to the group. The outlines she prints within the column, as well, demonstrate this division, if not among specific club members, at least around a time-line of meetings. For example, in October 1908, she explains that she would “arrange the programme for the winter by devoting two or three meetings to each of the authors referred to, and divide the work among the members in the divisions of the outline” (1034). Beyond simply recommending that clubs divide material among their members, Cutting explains how this practice can shape the content of meetings and allow club members to take responsibility for sharing knowledge with others. At one point, Cutting offers a reader advice on book selection and an introductory meeting on a historical study, then states, “I would continue the plan

of having four members give an informal talk at each meeting, and assign to each certain phases or people of the reign you are studying. For example, under Henry VII, have one member report on the establishment of the Court of the Star Chamber . . . .” (1035).

Cutting repeats similar advice throughout her responses, as she does in December 1908, when she again suggests that a group “have the members choose which of the romances each will take, and, in turn, report on the impressions each received of the book she read. In this way you will gain some knowledge of the different writings of an author” (1272). Similarly, she recommends that another group “might assign different chapters to the members of your club, or different sections of one chapter to several members, and in this way have instructive and interesting meetings” (1272). Here and elsewhere, Cutting emphasizes the value of working collaboratively in reading: splitting material up allows club women to expand the number of texts the group as a whole can become familiar with, and therefore provides multiple points of inquiry for club discussions.

For *Harper's Bazar*, the definition of “study” that was deployed in the “Home Study Club” required that systematic reading be followed by reflection, at times in the form of writing as I will address later, and discussion. Moreover, Cutting moved beyond simply suggesting that readers take time to reflect on what they have read, usually in preparation for a club discussion; she also commonly explains to readers the reflective strategies they should use, usually advising them to review their knowledge of the text's content, and then to discuss and compare their perceptions of the text with scholarly articles and club members. In the initial proposal for *Harper's* study club, after specifying that women should select “some good novel, and then giv[e] yourselves over to the pleasure of reading it,” Cutting specifies that, if they are reading in a group, women

should “consider how the plot is developing, the way the different characters are meeting situations, and get the opinion of each member as to what she would have done under similar conditions” (155). Late incarnations of the “Home Study Club” outline more rigorous interpretation and critique of novels, but throughout enjoyment is to be mixed with study. In the October 1908 edition, for instance, Cutting recommends that a reading circle focusing on George Sand “study for the fine delineation of her typical young girl and the display of political enthusiasm which posses her at the time when George Sand became an avowed Socialist” (1034). She further advises, as she does in other responses as well, that readers turn to scholarly critiques of writing techniques to further inform their reading: “you will find it a great help to you, in all your study relating to the novel, to read and study with much care the admirable volume of Charles Horne, *The Technique of the Novel*” (1034).<sup>15</sup> In many issues of “Home Study,” however, Cutting makes clear that readers will derive the most benefit from their study if they take time to reflect on their own reading of a text before turning to reviews or scholarly critiques. Here, *Bazar* readers are encouraged to compare their own observations with those of others. At times, Cutting helps readers by suggesting the types of themes and ideas they might choose to reflect on. In one issue, she advises that each club member complete her reading by “draw[ing] a comparison of the evidences of the artistic temperament in the three types of

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<sup>15</sup> In this same issue, moreover, Cutting (and the contributors themselves) reminds readers how serious reading should also be a pleasure. One reader, for instance, explains that “at my home in Ohio there are few trees and a wide expanse of the sky, and I am anxious to know something about the stars that I see night after night,” and Cutting responds by wishing to aid her in “having a real companionship with the stars themselves” and recommends a book “which makes a charming relationship between the nomenclature of the stars and literature” (1034). Likewise, in the May 1909 issue, Cutting’s overview of a club’s program notes both how members should learn to read the newspaper, and how this can be useful in preparation of writing a report: “the first thing to impress upon the members of your club is the necessity of reading newspapers with care and to begin what is known as the ‘clipping habit’ – that is, whenever, reading the paper, a member finds any article which bears upon the subjects I have given you, have her at once cut it out and use it for her material in making a report” (530).

artist – poet, musician, and painter – and make your own conclusions as to whether or not it is at variance with the moral qualities,” and, for another reader, notes that “you would find it would be interesting to make note of the various household utensils mentioned in Homer, the ornaments for women, and the weapons for the men” (Oct 1908, 1035; Dec 1908, 1271). Proposals for these kinds of reflections accompany the texts Cutting recommends, but are also often joined with the suggestion that readers should use this practice to prepare for club discussions, and if possible write down their reflections and observations.

The discussion, according to “Home Study,” that readers engage in with other club women or family members is aimed both at reporting on and sharing the reading and writing the women have done on their own, and at leading to points of further inquiry. Once again, Cutting not only outlines the process women should pursue, she also points to its pedagogical value; discussing how women are to share their study experiences with one another, she tells readers that:

The asking of questions should be encouraged, for it will almost surely lead to further study, as when, for instance, the member who is reporting on the week’s politics says Congress is assembled. Another member asks how the members of Congress are elected. If no one is able to give the information, the presiding member should require a report on it at the next meeting. It is in this way that the benefit of these clubs is so far-reaching (“Home Reading,” 155).

As she does in her plans for concepts readers should note in their own reading, Cutting often outlines for clubs the questions they can ask as a community. At one point, she recommends that “I would ask four of your members to describe the following pictures, tell the story of the lives of the artists, the circumstances under which the pictures were painted, and where they are now to be found” (Dec. 1908, 1272). For another club, she

demonstrates how the group discussion can be connected to their strategic division of material, telling them to:

agree among yourself which of the writings you will all read – The Marble Faun, for example – and devote one meeting to a discussion of the book. Contrast the characters of Miriam and Hilda. Have you any solutions for the mysteries of the story? I predict that the discussion will last above one meeting. Then have the members choose which of the romances each will take (Dec. 1908, 1272).

Further, Cutting makes clear to “Home Study” readers how reading collaboratively and discussing their individual reflections can foster more critical discussion. In September 1910, she explains that “it is a good plan to assign different characters to members of your circle, and ask them to join in an informal talk at the meetings upon the characters they have studied . . . She will be at liberty to call upon the different members for their opinions and in this way an interesting discussion will be started” (566). It is equally clear in the advice that she offers, that Cutting does not simply wish to help *Bazar* readers create questions for their current study material, but that she is using “Home Study” to teach women how to conduct group study themselves. In June 1911, a reader requests help with a study topic, but also indicates that her club has had difficulty generating discussions out of the papers they read. Cutting answers:

I suggest that for your other meetings, in order to promote this [group discussion], you have one or two members prepared to ask questions which would promote a discussion. These members should be told by the writer of the paper what her subject is, and something of the manner in which she means to treat it. One member should be prepared to take the opposite position, the other to concur with the author, and you will find that if they state their points of view immediately upon the close of the paper other members will be glad of an opportunity to either agree or disagree with them (302).

Here, Cutting is not only illustrating how women should respond to the writing of fellow club members, she is also offering readers a model for conducting an informal class.

While the majority of Cutting's responses to readers involved discussions of what they would read, she also consistently pointed to the reports that club members would give or the written reflection individual students should compose after reading. While papers were an important part of many women's study club, for the most part these texts were meant to be informative and in preparation for speeches made at meetings (Martin); in the "Home Study Club" writing fulfilled this purpose, but also represented a way for students to process and reflect on the reading they had done. All readers of the magazine are advised to keep a study journal, not:

a diary of sentiment, but rather the note-book of ideas, a place where you jot down the impressions of the day, for it clarifies one's thoughts to put them in writing. Write down also any question which occurs to you in connection with your daily reading, or some point which was not clear to you at the last club meeting, and which you wish to bring up at the next. It is in such ways that you will be of help to one another as well as to yourselves ("Home Reading," 156).

Here and elsewhere, writing is useful for "clarifying one's thoughts" and preparation for further study and discussions with other students. The September 1908 issue of the magazine demonstrates how composition connects with women's ability to share and distribute knowledge among one another. Responding to a group studying the biographies and marriages of "great men," Cutting advises them to "at each meeting, before commencing to read, ask one member to be prepared to give briefly a sketch of the writer. Have another member give a list of his works . . . then, as all these volumes are well illustrated, so enabling you to have a clear idea of the appearance, you will be ready to hear the love stories" (913). In this way, the reading and short reports that students prepare ahead of time contribute to the discussion and allow members to expand the material they are able to cover. But for reading conducted alone, Cutting also



recommends writing aimed at communicating reflection and “impressions” to other women, advising one reader “you would write me of your impressions and what gave them to you. In that way, I could follow you through your work and give you outlines of study from time to time” (Nov. 1908, 1153).

It is not uncommon, moreover, for Cutting to direct readers to compose their reflections on specific topics, as she does later in this issue, assuring another reader that “it would be helpful to have a notebook at hand and write in it your impressions of them. Make a comparison, for example, between the faithfulness of Ruth and Esther” (1154). Cutting is even more pointed about the benefits of reflection in her advice to a reader wanting to “do some systematic reading in American literature . . . to make the most of my reading so as to be able to discuss what I have read” (Jan. 1909, 102). Cutting notes that she should “think over carefully what you have read, and try and analyze what the author meant and what effect his writing has had upon you, and why. Then I would write down in a notebook the impressions I had received. This will do two things: it will help you remember what you have read and it will teach you to form judgments of literary styles” (102). At times, readers are advised to compare their own written reflections with more scholarly critiques of a subject or author. In the April 1909 issue, for example, Cutting recommends that “you write down from day to day . . . your own estimate of the author you have read that day. Upon reading the critical reviews of this same author note and compare your estimate and that of the reviewer, and then add that to the notes you have already made in your book. In this way you will develop your own critical faculty” (426). Here, Cutting suggests that this reflective writing practice will allow the reader to construct her own resource on literature; by keeping a thorough catalogue of her reading,

it “will simplify your work because when you wish to refer to any one of the authors you can do so more quickly” (426). Underlying all the advice Cutting offers readers on reflective writing and composing reports is the belief that the work they do in writing about what they have read will be a benefit to other members of their clubs; they are writing to instruct and share ideas with a community, and to inspire further discussion.

*Community and Agency: “Our Girls’ Exchange” and Harper’s Bazar*

Just as the “Home Study Club” makes clear that part of taking the study they do seriously involves connecting that reading with a community, so too do other columns throughout *Harper’s Bazar* support the idea that engaging with the magazine, as a reader or a contributor, means connecting with a community. Cutting makes this necessity apparent from the beginning of “Home Study” by claiming that “the main purpose of the department will always be kept in view – the establishing among Bazar readers of a fellowship in the realm of books” (“Home Reading,” 154). For Cutting the textual community in the “Home Study Club” is analogous to the physical communities the magazine is urging readers to create in their educational endeavors. Thus, the tone and structure of her department is established so that “all matters pertaining to books or study we will discuss through the pages of the Bazar in that familiar friendly spirit which would prevail were we gathered around the library table with its shaded lamp and the answering glow from the fire” (156). The image Cutting creates is both domestic and intimate, but it also articulates a guideline for readers that is and has been supported throughout discussions of literacy and education in the magazine: that the literacy practices “Home Study Club” readers take up will be part of a social exchange in the pages of the *Bazar* and among their families and neighbors. However, this perspective is not just visible in

the “Home Study” department in the editor’s responses to correspondents; it is equally visible in the written contributions of young women in “Our Girls’ Exchange.” In the section that follows, I will examine how the social literacy values that form the foundation for the reading practices Cutting advocates also appear in the reader-submitted writing published by the magazine.

“Our Girls’ Exchange” was a reader-sustained advice column for young women that began running in December 1909.<sup>16</sup> The column covered subjects ranging from fashion, school and reading, advice on boyfriends and engagements, and health. Although each contribution appeared under a title supplied by the editor, the column did not feature any other commentary from or even name an editor; writers, on the other hand, identified themselves by their initials and their city and state. Although this column did not outline a purpose and method as the editor of the “Home Study Club” had done, “Our Girls” did suggest the value of young readers contributing their writing and knowledge to others in a textual community. The description of the column that headed each issue indicated that: “Our girl readers are invited to fill this department every other month. Their contributions will be paid for at the usual space rates. Each contribution should cover, in not more than 200 words, some special interest or discovery of the writer which she believes will appeal strongly to other girls.” Whatever the motives of the magazine itself, the fact that “girl readers” will be paid the “usual space rates” for their contributions suggests, within the column at least, that their writing is valued; this sense of value, I would argue, ultimately shapes the style of discussion and exchange that

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<sup>16</sup> In December 1910, the “Our Girls” column shifted from being an advice column headed by Anna Ogden with periodic editor commentary, to a column calling for the contributions of readers. “Our Girls’ Exchange” first appeared as a title in 1911, at which point contributors named appeared beneath their letters; however, the format remained the same as what had begun in December 1910.

occurs there, which is modeled on the ideals that shape the “Home Study Club” Cutting identifies for (assumedly) older readers. In the column, writers acknowledge their sense of purpose for contributing to the club-like community of “Our Girls” by outlining a purpose for their advice or knowledge, and suggesting and responding to the topical concerns of the column.

Although the young women whose writing appears in “Our Girls” are not working collaboratively to read and examine a subject, they do work collaboratively to define and populate the advice column. In doing so, writers overtly acknowledge their understanding of an audience community, and the purpose their writing holds for that audience. The description of the column notes that interested readers should compose on topics of “some special interest or discovery of the writer which she believes will appeal strongly to other girls.” It is obvious, in the vast majority of the compositions printed in the column, not only that writers have made use of this advice, but that they have often felt the need to articulate this “appeal” in their writing, demonstrating both their conception of the needs to the other “girls” in the column and the value of their own written contribution. In the July 1910 issue, L.B.W. of Brooklyn begins her discussion of finding a job in book-binding by making clear that “I think that many girls who read the Bazar may find the experience of a friend of mine interesting and perhaps helpful” (456). Other writers are even more specific than L.B.W. in that they name specific audience populations that will most appreciate their advice; in the March 1911 issue, for instance, one writer states that “the business girl, who is obliged to stick close to the store or office all day . . . is likely to appreciate this suggestion,” while another notes that “I believe that this will interest high school girls” (149).

The contributions themselves are obviously focused on relating specific advice or, at times, explaining a topic, like book-binding, in which the writer feels she possesses some expertise, but it is equally true that the writers in “Our Girls” are relatively consistent about making clear the value of their topic, even if only to point out that “here is a suggestion for the girl who has but little to spend for the pleasure of gift-giving” (May 1911, 251). In the place of an editor doling out advice to readers, “Our Girls’ Exchange” has writers who openly call on the knowledge of contributors in the column, shaping the content of the column by making requests for information and responding to other writers. “One of Four,” for example, asks in the March 1911 issue if “some girls who live together tell me, through the Exchange, how they manage the matter of visitors?” (149). At the same time, A.B.S in May 1911 addresses an issue raised in a previous column, claiming “appropos of the question suggested in the Girls’ Exchange some time ago: I agree with the girl’s mother” (215). Even when they do not respond directly to the requests, topics, and questions posed in previous issues of the magazine, contributors to “Our Girls” still respond to the techniques and style of other contributors, clearly building on the success of previous readers who have gotten their writing published. As the column progresses over time, the scope of the contributions becomes more systematic, so that the most common form of contribution addresses a practical difficulty and offers advice – on how to fix a dress, handle gentlemen callers or a long engagement, or pay for schooling. Moreover, the issues on which advice is given move in trends. Over time, clothing and questions on social situations, such as how to remember new faces at a party, become the most popular topics. In this way, while the official description of the department leaves the content largely open, and in the first

issues the compositions covered a broader range of topics, over time readers establish a loose agenda, noting, often, how these topics suit the needs of the readers in their community.

### *Home Study Teachers*

It is not surprising, perhaps, that the writing published by young women in “Our Girls’ Exchange” so closely resembles the tone and style of the rest of the *Bazar* – editors naturally chose contributions suited to the agenda of the magazine and the writers themselves were no doubt modeling their writing not just on one another, but on what they saw produced in other parts of the magazine and encouraged by Cutting and writers offering advice in social letter-writing. It is equally true, however, that in not only inviting young readers to publish their work in a nationally-circulating magazine, but also offering to pay for their contributions, the *Bazar* was strongly encouraging young women to participate with the magazine, and guiding them toward the kind of activity Cutting and Welch endorse for older readers in their respective columns. In this way, “Our Girls” joined “Home Study Club” and “Club Women and Club Work” in initiating readers into the values and practices of women’s clubs. In fact, in many respects, the *Bazar* acts as a means of promoting the kind of practices and ideals already espoused by many, for the illustration of club work in Welch’s column and the instruction featured in Cutting’s column fall closely in line with the critical understanding of women’s clubs offered by Gere and Martin in their histories. The contribution offered by the *Bazar* is that it moves the literacy work of women’s clubs from the intimate realm of the clubs themselves, and brings their practices to a nationally-circulating outlet. Further, in introducing and

instructing new audiences in the reading and writing practices of clubs, the *Bazar* ultimately influences those very practices.

This is not to assert that what is called the “women’s club movement” was not already highly publicized and organized, as is evident in organizations such as The General Federation of Women’s Clubs, or that clubs did not already have the means to circulate texts beyond their own circle of members. As Gere discusses, women’s clubs already had their own publications that, in addition to publishing the papers club women had presented to one another, also offered similar reading and writing advice to that seen in “Home Study Club.” Nonetheless, the *Bazar*, unlike club journals, even ones that circulated broadly, was aimed at a much larger audience and one, more importantly, that was not already composed of club women. In this way, the *Bazar* took responsibility for soliciting new participants in club work and demonstrating how they should interact. By outlining and explaining women’s club practices to new audiences, the *Bazar* brings a club-inspired definition of advanced literacy to a national readership. According to the *Bazar*, for women – particularly middle-class women – advanced literacy means reflective and informative reading and writing habits acquired in collaboration with other women. Even more pointedly, in encouraging individuals studying on their own to join with the “Home Study Club” and in adapting its socially-oriented conception of literacy to letter-writing advice as well, the *Bazar* taught readers to apply the communal and even collaborative practices used by clubs to literacy events outside club work. The influence of the *Bazar*’s model is visible in the popularity of the “Home Study” column where women solicit the *Bazar*’s advice, and in letters citing the fact that the women have used Cutting’s advice and reading outlines in the past.

Equally important, the reading and writing practices promoted by and modeled in “Our Girls,” “Home Study,” and “Club Women and Club Work” give women a great deal of agency, as the *Bazar* urges readers to believe they are responsible for deciding upon and executing their own study programs and, more importantly, that they must not simply act as students, but as teachers as well; within the club model the magazine illustrates, women learn to construct agendas to teach themselves and one another. Although the *Bazar* is unusual in designing so much of its content around the values and practices of clubs, it is not the only site empowering readers to pursue advanced literacy in collaboration with others. As I discuss in chapter four, farming journals also encourage readers to see themselves as valuable participants in a literate community advancing agriculture as a profession. More specifically, *Michigan Farmer*, especially, was invested in promoting and reporting the club activity of reading circles, farmer’s clubs, and grange groups. While *Michigan Farmer* does not do the kind of work the *Bazar* undertakes in educating readers into club practices, it does introduce readers to the values of the reading and discussion habits of different kinds of clubs. For example, in a column called “Home Chats with Farmer’s Wives,” the editor observes that “our readers have been prompt to give suggestions concerning clubs and reading circles, (two very interesting ones being described in this number), and these cannot fail to be encouraging to those who have no such advantages, that is it will help to stimulate them to start one in their own community” (Feb 1898, 112). It is common, too, for *Michigan Farmer* to offer reports on various clubs and reading groups, continually suggesting that readers need to be interested in these kinds of activities. In “Neighborhood Literary Societies,” for instance, the editors explain that “the practicality and advantages of a ‘Young People’s



Reading Society' in every neighborhood, have already been presented in these columns. Now that we are about going into winter quarters, it is time to organize. The interest in literary matters awakened by such societies is usually very great, study and thought are induced, the attrition of mind upon mind sharpens the intellect, while the social benefits are not to be ignored" (7). In this way, *Harper's Bazar*, in conjunction with other widely circulating magazines, disseminated an outline of advanced literacy work that required readers to connect to with other readers, but moved beyond this to coach women in moving this outline into practice.

### CHAPTER III

#### BUYING AND SELLING LITERACY: THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL

Created by the same writers who would also produce the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Ladies' Home Journal* was one of the most widely read and influential magazines of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in no small part due to the magazine's advertising success, both in marketing itself and its sponsors. The scholarly history of the magazine has, for the most part, not ventured far from its gendered and consumer legacies. Two book-length critical histories of *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* by Jennifer Scanlon and *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post* by Helen Damon-Moore, concentrate on how the popular magazine constructed a "gendered commerce," establishing and promoting roles for women as (consumer) participants in the popular marketplace. Damon-Moore ultimately concludes that the *Ladies' Home Journal* urged women to be consumers rather than producers and, although ostensibly presenting readers with multiple, fragmented images of the roles they could assume, the magazine actually stressed a consensus view in which "readers' choices appear clearly delineated rather than open-ended, as the *Journal* essentially encouraged women to internalize rather than explore alternatives while they made sense of their changing world" (8). Likewise, it is clear in his statements in the *Journal* itself and in his autobiography, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, and in histories of the

magazine that touch on him, such as *The Attitudes of Edward Bok and the 'Ladies' Home Journal' Toward Women's Roles in Society* by Michael Dennis Hummel and *Reformer in the Marketplace: Edward W. Bok and the Ladies' Home Journal* by Salme Harju Steinburg, that Edward Bok, the editor from 1890 to 1919, staunchly promoted conservative gender roles for women, encouraged the maintenance of “separate spheres,” and wished to discourage, among others things, the increasing visibility of women’s clubs.

However, it is equally true that the *Journal* was originally the creation of a husband and wife editorial and publishing team, Cyrus Curtis and Louisa Knapp Curtis, who began the column “Women and Home” in *Tribune and the Farmer*, of which Cyrus was the editor and Louisa the business manager. The column was so popular that in 1883 the Curtises began to publish a monthly supplement, *Ladies' Journal*, which soon eclipsed *Tribune and the Farmer* in popularity and became its own magazine. Under Knapp-Curtis’s editorship, the *Ladies Home Journal* participated in defining a gendered commercialism, as Damon-Moore explores, but it was also a magazine that was written primarily by women, and “Knapp and her staff viewed their readers as peers and they spoke to them and heard from them in what they considered a two-way exchange. Images of women in Knapp’s *Journal* were varied, and flexibility was the magazine’s general orientation with regard to women’s roles” (29). When Edward Bok, the Curtises’ son-in-law, took over editorship of the magazine in 1890, he re-envisioned the *Journal* as a “helping” magazine – a magazine capable of advising and informing women on all aspects of home and family life – and valued less “flexibility” in regards to women’s roles.

However, like all magazines, the *Journal* continued to feature multiple points of view, and certain elements of the magazine, perhaps especially the departments aimed at literacy education and the correspondence columns, combined Bok's consumer ideology with an argument for the critical and empowered role of female buyers in a literary marketplace. In the sections that follow, I will examine how the *Journal's* emphasis on advertising and the capitalist market shaped its illustration of and engagement with women's advanced education before turning to the magazine's efforts to school readers in critical reading and writing practices. Through columns such as "Mr. Mabie's Literary Talks" and "Just Among Ourselves," as well as the series of articles aimed at educating prospective writers, the *Journal* situated its female audience as knowledgeable consumer-readers and as writers capable of appealing to a (mostly female) consumer audience.

#### *Serving a National Market*

It is perhaps unsurprising that the *Journal's* treatment of education and literacy should emerge connected with its own brand of consumerism and gender. That Edward Bok saw the *Ladies' Home Journal* as a magazine with a service mission is evident in both his own writing and in the histories that touch on his editorship. In his autobiography and in his frequent addresses to readers in "At Home with the Editor," Bok makes clear that his goal as editor is not only to ensure that the magazine remains profitable and remains a magazine "of higher standards . . . of uplift and inspiration," but that it also serve as an educational tool for middle-class American women, tutoring readers in domestic, social, literary, and consumer matters (Bok, *Americanization* 162). In discussing his vision for the periodical when he first assumed the role of editor, Bok specified that he wanted to create "a magazine that would be an authoritative clearing-

house for all problems confronting women in the home, that brought itself closely into contact with those problems and tried to solve them in an entertaining and efficient way; and yet a magazine of uplift and inspiration: a magazine, in other words, that would give light and leading in the woman's world" (Bok, *Americanization* 162). Wishing for the *Journal* to "become a vital need in the personal lives of its readers," Bok encouraged readers to write to the *Journal* for information and advice, and employed "an expert in each line of feminine endeavor," according to his own description, to read, research, and respond to all letters – which ran from ten thousand to nearly one million in a single year.<sup>17</sup> For Bok, this education was important in that he believed that "women were the key to uplifting society and nurturing future generations in the home." In taking over editorship of the *Journal*, Bok noted his reluctance, as a man, to assume responsibility for a magazine for women, but argued that, by employing female editors to work with him, he could be an expert on the home – the true sphere for which education should prepare women. His belief that women needed an education – the right kind of education – in order to be successful middle-class wives and mothers is evident in the stances toward education and literacy visible in the *Journal*, as I will discuss later, and stems from his belief that "the middle-class woman was the hope of the nation and the 'steadying influence' in American life" (qtd in Steinberg, 66).

In *Reformer in the Marketplace: Edward Bok and The Ladies' Home Journal*, Salme Harju Steinberg discusses Bok's own educational history, and his subsequent attitudes toward the public school system in the United States. After his family

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<sup>17</sup> "Before long, the letters streamed in by the tens of thousands during a year. The editor still encouraged, and the total ran to hundreds of thousands, until during the last year, before the service was finally stopped by the Great War 1917-1918, the yearly correspondence totaled nearly a million letters" (Bok, *Americanization* 174). Throughout his autobiography, Bok speaks of himself in the third person.

emigrated from the Netherlands in 1870, Bok, who did not speak English, attended a Brooklyn public school for several years before leaving to work at the age of thirteen. Both in his autobiography and in later editorials, as Steinberg notes as well, Bok maintains that the public school system is ill-equipped to prepare students for the actual challenges and careers ahead of them, a failing that self-education and work itself can mitigate. Having never attended college, Steinberg asserts that Bok “suspected that a college education harmed a man’s chances for business success. Successful businessmen were characterized by traits like practicality, which he asserted no college could teach. The best school for success was poverty” (38). This perspective is also occasionally visible in *Journal* articles such as “The Snobbery of Education” in April 1897. Through his writing, however, Bok sought to promote debate over reforms that were needed in public education. The *Ladies’ Home Journal*, with its unprecedented circulation, offered Bok a national pulpit for his views. Despite his beliefs in the current weaknesses of the American educational system, Bok, and by extension the *Ladies’ Home Journal* as a whole, promoted the understanding that literacy is dispensed by experts and schools, which he viewed as service institutions. That Bok saw his periodical as just such an institution is revealed in the tradition of expertise Bok sought to establish in the magazine’s publication, in his rhetorical positioning of the periodical as a benefactor, and in the editorial persona he, and a number of the editors under him, adopt in *Journal* articles.

Bok’s desire for his magazine “to be an authoritative clearing-house” of information and a figure of “light and leading in the woman’s world” led to repeated moves on the part of *The Ladies’ Home Journal* to portray itself as an authority figure in

matters of the home, family life, and education. In his autobiography, Bok reflects on the connection between his own lack of formal education and the creation of a popular magazine that could offer domestic and literary instruction for women, claiming that he “always felt that but for his own inability to secure an education, and his consequent desire for self-improvement, the realization of the need in others might not have been so strongly felt by him, and that his plan whereby thousands of others were benefited might never have been realized” (176). He is blunt about his belief that in upholding a service mission of instruction, the magazine had “become such a clearing-house as virtually to make it an institution” (180). Departments in the magazine that field letters from readers, such as “Just Between Ourselves” and “Side Talks with Girls,” often note that through these editorial departments, readers will have access to the knowledge of experts in the field. In previewing the creation of a regular column meant to answer questions on books and literature, to be called “The Library Bureau,” the *Journal* explains that it “has decided to add to its business an important department which will consist of a library bureau, fully equipped in all requisite features” and that “one of the best literary experts has been engaged to preside over the bureau; with two corps of assistants, one in Philadelphia and one in New York, and with special representatives in Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco” (“A New Departure” 33).<sup>18</sup> The emphasis on readers having access to experts through *Journal* department is also especially overt in the creation of a department aimed at young mothers. Fearing the “widespread unpreparedness of the average American girl for motherhood,” Bok employed two female physicians to not only field questions to be published in the magazine itself, but also to manage

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<sup>18</sup> Bok does not offer the name of the editor of the new bureau.

correspondence courses in taking care of infants (*Americanization* 176).<sup>19</sup> Bok reflects on the success of this model, claiming that “promptness of response and thoroughness of diagnosis were, of course, keynotes of the service: where the cases were urgent, the special delivery post and, later, the night-letter telegraph service were used” (*Americanization* 178). A problematic and questionable practice – medical instruction relayed through a popular magazine – the mother’s column services were nonetheless used by thousands of women, according to his own reporting, and the model was so popular that Bok attributed the ultimate success of the magazine to it, admonishing those who see magazines only as “an inanimate printed thing,” rather than institutions of knowledge and service in the lives of readers (*Americanization* 179).

Anticipating the success of the Library Bureau, the article itself assures readers that “in conjunction with its free education offers this is the most important undertaking which the Journal has ever assumed. It is in direct line with the policy of the magazine from the start” (“A New Departure” 33). The policy of constructing the magazine around a series of service-oriented departments headed by knowledgeable experts fit within Bok’s conviction in profitable altruism and is part of the magazine’s portrayal of itself as a benevolent institution of service. Considering the policies of both Bok and the Curtises’ original formation of the periodical, Steinberg focuses on education as one of

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<sup>19</sup> Not much information is available on these physicians. Interestingly, Bok does not introduce, in the magazine itself, either the service or their names – and, indeed, the magazine itself places no emphasis on the fact that they are female. Much of the work these physician-editors did was not visible in the magazine itself – that is, subscribers could write letters, but these letters and answers were not, for the most part, included in the magazine – this model of advice by correspondence was part of the *Journal*’s “service” to women, and the model was used for other advice departments. What did appear was first the “Young Mother’s Calendar” in 1904 and then the “Young Mother’s Home Club” in 1906 where “Emelyn Lincoln Coolidge, M.D. of The Babie’s Hospital, New York” discussed health and other issues related to raising children. Likewise, a question and answer column, called “Pretty Girl Questions by Emma Walker, M.D.” appeared from 1906-1907. In addition to working at The Babie’s Hospital and writing for the *Journal*, Dr. Coolidge also wrote a book, *The Mother’s Manual*, which was part of the Women’s Home Library series that Sangster edited.



the topics both editors used to establish the *Journal* as a benefactor of readers' education, citing Bok's belief that "to insure successful philanthropy, . . . sound business methods had to support altruistic projects" (*Americanization* 42). While the printed magazine itself might offer education in the form of the service departments and informative articles, *The Ladies' Home Journal* as an institution further reinforced both its service mission and its role as benefactor through its popular, and heavily advertised, scholarship program. In the July 1892 edition, an article, "Girls of Whom We Are Proud," outlines the results of the third scholarship competition in which young women sought to bring in large numbers of new magazine subscriptions in order to win a full scholarship to Vassar or Wellesley colleges.<sup>20</sup> The article praises the success of the women at their respective schools and advertises the continuation of the program, boasting that the *Journal's* Educational Bureau "now places before the girls of America the most complete series of free educations in the fine arts ever attempted" (12). The program did, in fact, benefit quite a number of readers; in his autobiography, Bok comments that "this plan was soon extended, so as to include all girls' colleges, and finally all the men's colleges, so that a free education might be possible at any educational institution. So comprehensive it became that to the close of 1919, one thousand four hundred and fifty-five free scholarships had been awarded" (*Americanization* 175). It also, however, provided a continuous source of promotional material (and new subscribers) for the magazine, which

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<sup>20</sup> At first there were a limited number of schools and education programs, but later there was no such limit. The magazine advertised that any girl who brought in over 1000 subscriptions would be able to "secure the lowest prize," suggesting that the number of winners each year was flexible (there were 3 the first year, in 1890) – though what Bok meant by "lowest prize" and the full details of how much funding the scholarships entailed is not offered. Contestants who were not able to reach the 1000 subscription quota were paid a return of 25 cents per subscription in 1890.

regularly updated readers on selected scholarship students, providing their stories and even photographs.

*The Editor as Teacher: Instruction in Reading Practices*

In *Reformer in the Marketplace*, *Magazines for the Millions*, and nearly every history touching on the *Journal* and Edward Bok, the editor and the writers under him are credited with establishing the trend in periodical writing for creating an editorial persona that was personal, emotionally engaging, and didactic. Whether or not such a claim is true, Bok himself sought to argue that it was so: “the method of editorial expression in the magazines of 1889 was also distinctly vague and prohibitively impersonal. The public knew the name of scarcely a single editor of a magazine: there was no personality that stood out in the mind: the accepted editorial expression was the indefinite ‘we’; no one ventured to use the first-person singular and talk intimately to the reader” (*Americanization* 162).<sup>21</sup> Bok was equally clear, however, that the intimate persona projected through the magazine also needed to have authority, because “the American public loved a personality: that it was always ready to recognize and follow a leader, provided, of course, that the qualities of leadership were demonstrated” (*Americanization* 176). If *Harper’s Bazar* sought to promote and re-create the culture of a woman’s club in social and academic endeavors, *The Ladies’ Home Journal* sought to mimic a school presided over by benevolent teachers in the form of department editors. Bok establishes himself as a teacher in his column, “At Home With the Editor,” where he addresses the letters he has received from readers, using the topics raised in their correspondence, while never reprinting the readers’ actual words, to offer lessons on a wide range of issues, such

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<sup>21</sup> In fact, other magazines did contain personable editors, such as “Father Forrester” in the children’s magazine at mid-century. However, this form of editorial expression was not common until later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and numerous periodical histories make note of Bok in discussing the beginning of the trend.

as domestic disputes, letter-writing, and community involvement.<sup>22</sup> Equally as important, however, this practice is adopted by other editors of the *Journal* departments as well, such as Hamilton Mabie in “Mr. Mabie’s Literary Talks” and Mrs. Lyman Abbott, known as “Aunt Patience,” in “Just Among Ourselves.” In these columns, *Journal* readers are offered both explicit and implicit advice in reading and, to a lesser degree, writing. In his columns, Mabie addresses the questions and concerns of readers and provides lengthy discussions not simply of what to read, but how to read; at the same time, “Just Among Ourselves” – a correspondence column – is almost the only space in the *Journal* where readers can see their own words in print and where they receive explicit advice in writing for a market of readers. Just as the *Journal* argued that literacy was a consumer commodity that had to be dispensed by an institution, such as the *Journal* itself, so too did these three columns, as I will explore in the following section, demonstrate that participating in advanced literacy was analogous to entering the consumer market. Largely through Mabie’s long-running columns, the *Journal* focused more emphatically on women as critical and knowledgeable readers precisely because the editors framed their female audience primarily as consumers rather than producers of literacy. Instruction in reading practices, then, was linked to readers becoming discriminating consumers, while writing instruction emphasized the writer’s need to be conscious of market economies.

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<sup>22</sup> In the first issue of the column “At Home With The Editor,” Bok assures readers that executive work will be left on the editor’s desk and his addresses to his readers shall be composed at home: these pleasantly familiar talks, which monthly I enjoy on this page with my readers, shall come from within the precincts of my own home. There, by my own fireside, I shall be better able to imagine myself seated at your hearthstone. There, in my favorite chair, cheered by the glow of the evening home lamp, and with those around me who are man’s best friends, I know I shall feel closer in sympathy with your interests and thoughts. Since home is the watchword of our Journal, why is not the editor’s home the best place from which he should talk to his readers? (10).

Beginning in March 1902, Hamilton Wright Mabie<sup>23</sup> heads “Mr. Mabie’s Literary Talks,” later “A Literary Talk with Mr. Mabie” and “Mr. Mabie Answers Some Literary Questions,” in which he provides reviews of current publications, answers readers’ questions about reading and courses of study, and offers lessons in reading practices. In all incarnations of the column, Mabie focuses his greatest energies on guiding the habits and choices of readers, rather than on advertising particular books. Like Bok, Mabie positions himself as both a teacher and literary critic with authority – an authority the *Journal* assumed its readers would already recognize because of his previous work as an essayist and lecturer: Mabie is one of the only column editor whose name appears in the column title, and his column is always concluded with an actual signature graphic, as though he has officially authorized the statement printed in the magazine, a practice not regularly adopted by other *Journal* writers. In fact, the first several issues in which Mabie appears explicitly assure readers that the editor’s discussions are not influenced by the magazine’s desire to advertise, with a note from Bok claiming that: “in connection with his work for this magazine, all the books written about are of Mr. Mabie’s personal selection. In this choice, he is left absolutely free, and in no respect whatsoever is this selection influenced by the editor of the Ladies’ Home Journal. Authors and publishers will, therefore, kindly refrain from sending any books, intended for review, to the office of this magazine” (“Literary Talks” 17). In the discussions that follow, Mabie teaches readers “steps to profitable reading,” littering his lessons with consumer-oriented terms

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<sup>23</sup> In the 1900 *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 10 Mabie’s work as an author and editor is discussed. He is also described as an educator and lecturer: “as a public lecturer on literary and social questions he has a wide audience. He is, in fact, one of our most influential American educators, working outside the curriculum” (43).

and educating his readers on how to be critical book buyers, on how to manage time effectively, and on how to consume books properly.

The advice Mabie offers readers in his discussions is equally split between explaining reading habits they should emulate and outlining the kinds of material they should select; and while Mabie's column does include book reviews and, at times, lists of selected books in a topical area – in October 1904, for instance, he focuses on reading about Japan – Mabie places greater importance on readers learning to select reading material for themselves. In these lessons, Mabie seeks to educate women as critical consumers of books, enlightening them on the deceptions of the publishing market and advising them in making knowledgeable choices. Mabie makes clear to readers throughout his columns that the current literary market, where newspapers, magazines, and books are produced more cheaply, challenges readers to be smart buyers. In the October 1903 issue, he discusses the “authority of the printed page,” arguing that printed words, because of their appearance of permanence, are granted an authority that spoken words lack and advising readers not to trust something simply because it appears in print:

If it is dull, prolix, uninteresting, or if we do not respect the talker's judgment we pay no attention to what he says; or if we listen we remain unaffected by what we hear. But if the same ideas and words were put into type for many people they have a certain weight. All definite expression exerts an influence, but the expression which is made in print seems to exert an influence which is often entirely out of proportion to its value (15).

Mabie attributes this “influence” at least partly to the consumer market, explaining that books were historically given high social and commercial value because they were less easily made, more expensive, and less readily available than books at the turn-of-the-

century. In this argument, he outlines the benefits and “evil” of cheaper books, claiming that readers now have greater access to textbooks and literature, but:

on the other hand, an immense constituency of uneducated readers, without critical judgment, ignorant of the standards of art and bent on entertainment simply, has come into existence and has made the trade of writing books, as contrasted with the art of writing books, extremely profitable . . . the writing of books as merchandise, to be disposed of in the season in which they appear, and worn out, so to speak, in that season, is an honest trade, but it has no relation to the making of literature (15).

Thus, one of Mabie’s goals is to help readers navigate the literary market by arming them with the critical tools to distinguish between literature and “merchandise.” This lesson in distinction fits in well, of course, with the *Journal*’s emphasis on its middle-class, female readers as the new primary consumer population, but Mabie’s advice also places a great deal of faith in the audience’s ability to be critical readers, as the “Literary Talks” column ultimately assures readers that they have the authority to make sound consumer (and literary) judgments for themselves.

Throughout his columns, then, Mabie points out ways that the women in his audience might learn to discriminate in their buying habits and reading choices, the latter often being connected to the former. In the October 1904 issue Mabie acknowledges that “every intelligent man and woman ought to be a newspaper reader; but every newspaper reader ought to be as discriminating in the choice of his journals as in the choice of his books” (19). He next outlines the characteristics of good and bad newspapers, by which readers might identify them, claiming that “there is no place in any intelligent home for the so-called ‘yellow journal.’ This variety of newspaper purports, as a rule, to be edited by those who work with their hands, and to espouse the interests of the masses who toil; but, in almost every case, this assumption of devotion to workers is a commercial device

and is the cheap mask of the demagogue in journalism” (19). The *Journal*’s sense of its audience is apparent here as Mabie makes clear that “the poor man,” rather than the reader, “has no worse enemy than the ‘yellow journal’” (19); *Journal* readers, on the other hand, are instructed that “a good daily and, if possible, a good weekly journal ought to be in every home – a journal which may be of any shade of politics, but which ought to be clean, intelligent in its discussion of events, and fair in its presentation of news” (19). Mabie leaves the choice of journal up to his readers, refraining from offering the titles of any “good weekly” journals, much as he does in the October 1903 issue where “Literary Talks” focuses on breaking down the characteristics of “good” literature rather than providing lengthy lists of *Journal*- and Mabie-approved texts. In this issue, titled “How To Know Good Books,” Mabie argues, much as he does with newspapers, that “it is of prime importance, in view of the great number of books published, that readers should know how to distinguish the good from the bad, the book which is a work of art from a book that is a trade product” (15). Warning readers that “it is not an easy matter to determine the rank of a book at the time of its first appearance,” Mabie discusses ways the reader might learn to select worthy reading material, suggesting, for instance, that “one of the best ways of training the judgment and educating the taste” is to “store in one’s memory” a number of passages from great books (15). Mabie is clear, however, that readers should be responsible for developing their own judgment – primarily through regular reading – of the books “which minister to our needs or will contribute to our self-education” (June 1902; 17).<sup>24</sup> He stresses that reading recommendations are best when the recommender knows the reader well and consults the reader’s own interests and

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<sup>24</sup> As the only way to distinguish among these column entries is by their dates, here and throughout, when the date is not first mentioned in the text, it will appear in the parenthetical citation as above.

tastes. He warns his audience, then, to be as critical of book reviews as of advertised books themselves, maintaining that “the reviews of new books are often partial, superficial, and untrustworthy, but one who reads them soon discovers whether the book under discussion is likely to be of value or interest to him” (17). Once again, Mabie reminds readers that in order to develop a “profitable” reading habit, they must become discerning consumers in their choice of material, in this case through becoming a critical reader of reviews.

Even as Mabie focuses on readers developing literary “judgment,” however, it is equally true that large parts of his advice are framed in terms of reader-buyers detecting “inferior novels.” He tells readers that, while “educating the taste” may be a long-term endeavor, “the inferior novel ought, however, to be easily detected by its exaggeration, its loose and awkward construction, its lack of sincerity, its vulgarity of standards and language. As a rule, novels of this kind, even if they secure a large sale, are not much talked about, and are soon forgotten” (Oct. 1903; 15). In fact, Mabie offers “Five Marks of a Really Good Novel” for readers to use when they are selecting (or buying) books.<sup>25</sup> That Mabie is thinking of his readers as consumers is apparent in advice like that given in the May 1902 issue where, in instructing readers on “How to Form the Reading Habit,” he laments that “too many people read the books which come in their way instead of putting themselves in the way of getting the right books. They buy and borrow without thought or plan because they do not understand that reading ought to be a resource as well as a recreation” (17). Here, as in many other places, Mabie not only positions his

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<sup>25</sup> Among other things, a “good novel” is marked by the fact that it is “interesting but it must also be sound, sane, well-constructed and well-written.” He clarifies that “a sane story is both sincere and true to life” (15).



readers as consumers of books, but also suggests how reading habits should be a part of “profitable reading,” as he refers to it in the May 1902 issue.

The idea that literacy was a resource that *Journal* readers should manage economically visibly frames the practices Mabie suggests readers adopt, including the emphasis he places on time management. Throughout his discussions of the importance of acquiring the right kinds of books and journals, Mabie also impresses upon his audience the importance of being equally critical of the amount of time spent reading. Following his exploration of recognizing good and “yellow” newspapers, for instance, Mabie also notes that “the newspaper ought to be read just so far as is necessary to secure an adequate impression of current history, and no farther. . . . but under no circumstance can newspapers educate and stimulate men and women as the best books can educate and stimulate, and the habit of reading many newspapers, to the entire exclusion of the serious reading of books, is a great waste of time” (19). The idea that his *Journal* students not waste time appears in other issues as well, where Mabie both offers suggestions for times of the day women might find time to read, and hints that readers need to manage time as they would any other resource. In the May 1902 issue, he outlines a series of reading practices, including how audience members might schedule reading into their day, advising them that “if you have ten minutes in the morning, ten minutes in the afternoon, and ten minutes in the evening, put them together by using them for one purpose and you have half an hour . . . . three hours and a half a week, patiently utilized, are sufficient for making the acquaintance of a great group of books or learning a language” (17). He goes further, however, in pointing out to readers precisely why it is important that they be aware of the choices they make in regards to time spent reading; he

asserts that “thrift of time is as necessary as thrift of money, and he who knows how to save time has learned the secret of accumulating educational opportunity” (17). Here and, as I will explore in the next section, in other *Journal* articles, readers acquire advanced literacy “opportunities” by being savvy consumers – consumers who are, in this instance, thrifty with their time. That at least some readers understood the connection between time, economy, and literacy presented in Mabie’s column is evident in some of the letters that appear in later issues, such as an additional editorial offered in the October 1905 issue, “Mr. Mabie on Self-Culture.” Here, Mabie opens his discussion with a reader’s letter discussing a book that had been reviewed in the previous issue:

I am confident that not one person in fifty of the class which this book is intended to assist can with any economy of time find his path to a class of books or course of study best adapted to his condition. It is not enough to tell us that we need something more than to rake together a mass of general information on various subjects: we need to be told where we can, without too great waste of time, find a supplement to a more or less limited education. We need to have pointed out to us just what books we should seek as indispensable amid the ocean of books which floods the libraries and stores. If we can read but few books comparatively then tell us which authors to select, and what one or two works of such authors are really essential to a fairly well-informed individual, asking them up in chronological order (20).

Reminding readers that columns like his own can only offer general selections and that readers should seek out friends and librarians close to them for book advice, Mabie also makes clear that he agrees with the overall perspective of reader’s letter; that faced with an “economy of time” and an “ocean of books,” readers need to be critical of budgeting time and selective in their reading choices. It is equally apparent, moreover, that what Mabie in his columns and his readers in their letters are discussing is not simply reading for pleasure – although Mabie is adamant that reading should be enjoyable too – but

rather a thoughtful plan of study, “a supplement to a more or less limited education,” not unlike what *Harper’s Bazar* imagined for its readers participating in women’s clubs.

Time, however, is not the only resource with which Mabie advises readers to be “thrifty” or critical; he also recommends that his audience adapt their reading habits to make sure that time spent reading is valuable. Here, Mabie speaks of methods that will allow readers to make books a “personal possession” and to take full advantage of the educational resource that the book represents. Explaining that his *Journal* audience should read for pleasure, in the June 1903 issue, Mabie also recommends that they also always read with a method, claiming that “there ought to be method in reading, and reading ought to be study in the truest sense: serious attention to thought, to structure, to style; such attention as makes a book, once read, a personal possession of the reader” (15). Mabie’s suggestion that women wishing to use their reading as “study in the truest sense” pay attention to elements such as structure and style echoes approaches to literature used in school, of course, but here these practices are part not only of critical reading, but of making the text a “possession.” The idea of possessing texts appears in other issues as well, such as June 1902 where Mabie outlines different reading habits his audience might use, such as taking notes or writing summaries, but then assures readers that “readers of all habits will do well to think over a book after it is finished, and make sure that they have it clearly in mind. Any device which serves to make knowledge or thought of the book ours is worth trying” (17). The framing of books and knowledge as consumable possessions recurs in the places where Mabie considers how reading circles and clubs might help better distribute both. Advocating that men and women “of culture and some leisure” might benefit their communities and one another by taking part in

reading clubs and book-lending circles, he argues that “there is in this country a great unused educational capital in the possession of men and women of culture and some leisure, and there is a great need and craving for education. Why should the demand not be met by the supply?” (Sept. 1903; 15). For Mabie and his *Journal* readers, adult literacy activities are treated as a matter of market forces and “unused capital.” That reading is valuable as a form of self-education is emphasized throughout Mabie’s columns where he stresses the need for adults to continue sharpening their reading skills because “the reading habit, intelligently formed and patiently adhered to, insures in time an education of the most vital sort. All men and women who are really educated are self-educated. Schools can do much, but the best thing the schools can do is to develop those habits of mind which enable a man to go on from the point at which the work of the school ends” (May 1902; 17). The educational capital of books, moreover, depends, according to Mabie, on the practices of the reader: “when you have your book in your hand forget that there is any world outside its pages, *for the educational value of reading depends largely upon the habit of attention*” (17, emphasis mine). As he describes in later issues, for Mabie, even reading for pleasure can offer methods of tapping into the educational resource of books if readers are willing to give their whole attention to the author’s words. In June 1903, for instance, he explains that “it is a mistake to make reading a task, because much of the benefit which flows from coming in contact with another’s thought or writing is received only when one’s mood is so relaxed that the whole mind can be surrendered to another” (17). Mabie’s list of preferred practices – summarized in this same issue – is flexible and he is quick to remind readers that they should adapt their reading habits to suit their situation and interests, advising loosely:

#### Six Rules for Those Who Read

I – Do not read at random; select your books in advance.

II – Read intelligently and with foresight; make a scheme for the season, not too large to be worked at.

III – Read books that interest you; follow the line of your taste unless your taste is wholly untrained; if it is, read good books by different fields until you find out what you care for most.

IV – Have a book always within reach and make the most of your spare minutes.

V – Read only good books and put your mind on them. To get the best out of books you must be able to remember them.

VI – Do not make a task of reading; read for enjoyment (Jan. 1904; 17).

He remains adamant, however, that *Journal* readers who develop the ability to be critically aware of their book consumption – in terms of choice, time, and reading method – will derive the greatest advantage from the educational and social resources books (and journals) possess.

#### *Editors and Correspondents: Instructing Writers*

In this way, the *Journal* seeks to help its readers become expert consumers of the written word, a goal that shapes the attitude toward women's writing practices that appear in the articles and columns alongside Mabie's "Literary Talks." Overall, the magazine assumes that the majority of the audience will remain readers, and restrict their writing efforts to letters – articles like "Letter-Writing for Busy People," which acknowledges that "letter-writing may be the only literary work you ever do," attest to this fact (Hale 24). While the *Journal* does occasionally contain articles on letter-writing, the majority of its writing-related articles are focused on the realities of the literary trade, and how prospective writers may appeal to business-minded editors and publishers.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, a correspondence-based column, "Just Among Ourselves," was in fact nearly the

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<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, the magazine contains rather few stand-alone articles on letter-writing. The majority of the letter-writing advice is offered through the "Side Talks With Girls" column and its editor, Ruth Ashmore, and also in the "My Girls" column by Margaret Sangster, the editor of *Harper's Bazar*. In this way, the discussions of writing letters are strangely compartmentalized within the magazine.

only place in the magazine where readers' words were regularly reproduced, and, although readers do create a textual community within this column, it is also in this space that *Journal* readers enter their work into the economy of the magazine. It is not, perhaps, a coincidence that all, or nearly all, of the writers of these articles are male, and this at a magazine where Bok had made a point of hiring female editors to write the *Journal* columns. In fact, while the *Journal*'s gendered perspective on the literacy skills and needs of its audience is never explicitly articulated, Bok's editorial choices emphasize his belief that, for the most part, his female reading audience will be consumers rather than producers of public writing. Bok advertised to his audience that the *Journal* was produced by an editorial board of women and, indeed, the lists of associate editors appearing on the title pages of the magazine attest to this policy. However, while nearly all articles concerning letter-writing are written by women, Mabie's reading column and the articles discussing writing for publication are all written by men. Despite this fact, however, while these articles do position their authors as authorities, and gatekeepers, in the literary business and their readers, correspondingly, as novice writers, they do not focus on their imagined writers as being particularly female and, in fact, sometimes clearly assume that some of their novice writers are male. What is significant to my discussion here, moreover, is how closely these separate articles follow Mabie's example of directly linking writing practices with consumerism, in this case women writing for other consumer readers – a perspective that is ultimately visible in the correspondence columns.

If Mr. Mabie's "Literary Talks" column suggestively links literacy to consumerism in his discussions, the stand-alone articles featured in the *Journal* on

writing manuscripts are able to discuss little else. In fact, articles such as “The Literary Beginner” and “Helps to Literary Success” spend an equal amount of time illuminating readers on the particulars of the book and magazine trade as they do offering advice on actually composing and sending manuscripts. In Bok’s “Literary Leaves,” readers are treated to a thorough outline of the earnings of popular authors – “Mr. Howells has undoubtedly a comfortable income, that is, comfortable for an author, but that income, I do not think, exceeds \$15,000, of which two-thirds represent his work as editor of the ‘Study’ department in *Harper’s Magazine*” – before the editor discusses the likely earnings for and costs to new authors in the sub-section, “Literature Not a Bed of Roses” (11). Beyond the discussions of the habits and material realities of known authors, what is striking throughout the collection of articles on writing featured in the magazine between 1889 and 1910 is how consistent they are in introducing readers to publishing as a trade and framing writing-related advice as methods of appealing to publishers and consumer audiences. Explaining for readers the process they will need to go through to submit a piece of writing to an editor or publisher is, of course, like most other aspects of the *Journal*, a matter of practical advice offered by an expert in the form of a *Journal* writer or editor. Moreover, it is apparent that Bok and other *Journal* writers are assuming a high level of writing skill in their reading audience: the magazine does not use space to discuss grammar or organization, but devotes time instead to explaining the conventions for addressing an editor or publisher. It is important to remember, as well, that each of the articles I examine begins on the premise that, while they may be ignorant of the business side of publishing, *Journal* readers do not lack the skills necessary to write publishable essays and manuscripts.

In an aptly titled 1891 article, “Writing for the Dollar,” Bok addresses what he imagines are his readers’ concerns about writing for income: “is there a livelihood to be made in literature?” (18). He warns readers that “to write only for the dollar is folly,” admonishing prospective authors not to make an income their sole object in writing; however, he devotes far more of his article space to ensuring that his readers do realize that they, in fact, are writing for a consumer market and that part of their strategy should be not to appear too interested in monetary concerns. He warns readers that “the most irritating author is one who, in her letter, obtrusively shows that all she wants is to ‘get all she can.’ In a sense, this is right. What is worth printing is worth paying for. Get the best prices you can for your work. That is always legitimate. But don’t make the price the whole object, the sum and substance of your letter to editor or publisher” (18).

Franklin B. Wiley also addresses the subject of letters to the editor in his series of articles, “The Literary Beginner.” Wiley, like Bok, establishes himself as an insider in the literary trade by opening his article with a description of his experience, explaining that “every year thousands of manuscripts pass through my hands, and among these are many hundred from literary beginners, who seize the occasion to write confidential letters to the editor” (36). His goal, throughout his series of articles, is to educate readers on publishing, and he does so in his first issue by discussing strategies for writing to editors as businessmen. He recommends, for instance, that letters avoid “confidential details respecting your domestic or personal affairs, or with elaborate explanations as to why you have written the accompanying manuscript, and what your motives and objects are in submitting it” (“Literary Beginner 4,” 38). In terms of style, readers are told not to “assume a jaunty, sarcastic or insistent tone with the editor” and are offered a list of



phrases to avoid (38). Explaining to readers that they should include the number of words in their manuscript and return postage, Wiley reminds his readers that they need to appeal to busy businessmen.

He further counsels writers to consider “the general appearance” of the letter and manuscript – that it is properly paged, folded, and neat – and cautions them that “occasionally old authors are guilty of this fault [submitting bad looking manuscripts;] but they can better afford it” (36). That new writers – the kind who are reading their magazine – cannot afford to ignore appearances in their letters and submissions is a concept that recurs both in the articles offering actual writing advice and those merely describing the literary market. In “Helps to Literary Success,” Bok explains that “something depends upon the mechanical preparation” of articles and stories because “even the best dinner can be ruined by poor service; likewise are the chances of literary work lessened by the manner in which they are sent to market” (12). *Journal* readers are instructed to pay attention to handwriting and punctuation because “it is irritating to an editor in reading a manuscript to be compelled to supply a comma here and a period there” (12). Overall, Bok and Wiley assure readers that writers need to consider mechanics, in particular, not simply because they wish to make a good impression or have their work be understandable, but because of the realities of the current market where “manuscripts come by the thousands into the magazine offices” (12).

Bok and Wiley are equally adamant that their *Journal* students need to learn to appeal to the mass market. In “Writing for the Dollar,” Bok offers only general advice, telling readers to “write what the public wants; write in a plain popular style,” arguing that “it is one thing to write well, but if the material produced is not in touch with the

wants of the times, the work may go begging for a market” (18). The idea that writers, in developing their ideas and tailoring their composition style, need to consider not merely audience, but the tastes of the current literary market reappears in articles like Wolstan Dixey’s “Poets and Editors,” where Dixey first reminds writers that “poets, too, must live – at least they must exist, and the law of supply and demand will operate even among the loftiest spirits” (12). He recommends, then, that “it is always safe to be in the style,” and tells hopeful poets that at present they should avoid overly sentimental wording, which he illustrates by “‘dewey violets’ and ‘babbling brooklets’; nor with the ‘cutest’ remarks of the cutest little children in the world” (12). Importantly, too, Dixey draws a direct connection between appealing to the public and appealing to a business-minded editor, asserting that editors function as representatives of market appeal: “it is an editor’s business to taste for others; and even supposing him to insist on his personal preference, his taste has been formed mainly by contact with traditional standards” (12). Bok suggests that writers consider the tastes of the editor, or more precisely the portion of the market he represents, in selecting a journal, directing them to “first and foremost spend a few days in carefully looking over the principal magazines and periodicals of the day, and notice the particular class of articles, poems and stories printed in each” (“Helps” 14).

Considering the “public appetite,” *Journal* articles demonstrate, is also a concern to writers in terms of the time they spend composing, both for the amount of time they allow themselves for revision and reflection, and for the appearance they create. In “Words for Young Authors,” Bok reminds his readers that “literary success is like wealth: harder to keep than to make it,” and then illustrates the dangers of rushing to

publish a second book shortly following an initial success. His concerns, ultimately, center on market appeal: “the critic has used his words of encouragement of you and whetting the public appetite. Let the public wait a little while for your next” (13). According to Bok, writing too quickly will not produce “the best writing,” and it will overwhelm the “appetite” of the market; “never get the foolish notion that the public is just pining for something else from your pen. It is not. It has never yet sat up nights for any author’s work, and never will. Once you get the ear of the reading public: then the greatest caution is necessary” (13). In terms of process, as well, Bok cautions that writers spend more time considering their writing before committing it to paper, advising that they “sedulously avoid corrections, erasure and interlineations [in manuscripts]. Don’t do on paper what you ought to do mentally” (“Helps” 12). He argues that this is especially the case because writers want to make their work appealing to busy editors. Once again, Bok argues that *Journal*-reading writers must follow this rule because they do not have the monetary or literary capital to avoid it; citing that Victor Hugo was famous for submitting manuscripts full of corrections but that “Victor Hugo could afford to do a great many things you cannot” (12). In his series, Wiley agrees with Bok, telling writers that they will need to copy several drafts, asking “have you ever written a really presentable first draft of a manuscript?” (“Literary Beginner 5,” 26). He recommends instead that “the first draft needs to be copied after it has been revised” (26). Moreover, Wiley implies that, due to the volume of works submitted for publication, all writers must take time in preparing the mechanical aspects of their manuscripts because when “you send out a manuscript to win its way in the literary world, you enter into a competition with other writers which is every whit as keen as that in any other line of business.

Consequently . . . you cannot afford to overlook or disregard even the slightest detail that may help you in disposing of your wares” (“Literary Beginner 3,” 42).

Although writers are not paid for their contributions to correspondence columns such as “Just Among Ourselves,” the editors of these departments do suggest that letter-writers are entering into a *Journal* market and that their work needs to appeal to other reader-consumers. One of the more popular correspondence columns and one of the few, more importantly, that actually published readers’ letters – rather than summarizing what a correspondent had said, a tactic that prevailed in most *Journal* departments – “Just Among Ourselves” was presided over by “Aunt Patience,” who ultimately identified herself, and signed her columns, as Mrs. Lyman Abbott.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Abbott was a member of the Anti-Woman Suffrage Society and her husband, a former Congregationalist minister, wrote for and edited *Harper’s Magazine* before taking over the Christian magazine, *The Outlook*. Like Bok, Abbott sought to foster domestic intimacy with readers in her column and forwarded a conservative agenda in her writing. Nonetheless, by printing her readers’ words and guiding an ongoing dialogue among readers and herself, Abbott followed up on the advice offered by Bok, Dixey, and Wiley by guiding women into writing for other *Journal* consumers.

The market value of readers’ work is established early on in “Just Among Ourselves,” for the initial issue introduces the column by describing its purpose:

What do you think, dear Journal sisters? I have persuaded Mr. Bok to let us have hereafter, in every number of our dear Journal, a page all to ourselves – a page which will be just for us, and through which the whole

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<sup>27</sup> The first two issues of “Among Ourselves” were edited by an “Aunt Catherine.” Catherine, however, never offered her true identity and she was swiftly replaced by Abbott as “Prudence.” The tone and style of the column in the first two months, moreover, was consistent with Abbott’s technique. Given that Bok himself had briefly headed a column, “Just Between Ourselves,” that functioned in much the same way as “Among Ourselves” ultimately did, it seems likely that “Catherine” was simply a place-holder for a column intended for Abbott. The Abbotts, who wrote for and edited *The Outlook*, were already connected to Bok through their work with Mabie.

band of sisters can talk to each other on anything they like. Now, is not that nice? (24).

Although the title of the department suggests that its purpose is to promote “talk,” the column editor, framing herself as an “Aunt,” prints the concerns and ideas of readers, and then offers advice, seeking to lead readers through her answers and through suggestions of further topics. Here, however, in addition to making readers understand that this column is meant to be an outlet for their thoughts and problems so that they can “talk to each other now just as if we were personal friends,” the editor describes the creation of the column as though readers have managed to purchase the space by “persuading” Bok. More pointedly, she further notes that Bok promised “as few advertisements as possible on our page so that we might have plenty of room for our ‘talks.’” The advertisements, of course, did in fact pay for space in the magazine, and although in the original issues the advertisements on the “Just Among Ourselves” page are restricted to one or two, the space allotted to the advertisers grows over time as the space allowed for readers shrinks. The spatial economy of the column is, moreover, explicitly linked to the writing that women may publish there. Abbott explains to readers that they will need to curtail their letters to fit the space available, saying:

I want you to write to me just as you would talk – only do not make your letters long. The page looks big, I know, but it is so quickly filled up, and I want as many of the sisters to talk as possible. So let us all think of each other, and rather write often than long, and then there will be room for all (June 1890; 24).

*Journal* readers-consumers, apparently, cannot quite afford to write long letters for publication. The request for writers to be brief recurs in the column, as Abbott reminds readers in September 1890 that: “we must be careful not to make our letters too long. Let us have space for many and we shall all be gainers. Do you know how much you can get

into a telegraphic message of ten words? It is marvelous what an amount of information can be condensed into a telegram. I could talk longer about not talking so long, but will use example rather than precept" (12). *Journal* readers appear to accept the editor's advice; in the initial issues of the column, letters range in length and writers often open with "talk" not relating directly to the issue they wish to present or advice they wish to offer. In the months following Abbott's admonition, however, the length of letters generally remains short, and correspondents, although they do often acknowledge their enjoyment of the magazine or column, move more directly into their primary objective in writing. Of course, it is possible that the editor has edited the introductions of these letters to abbreviate them; nonetheless, the writing that appears in and is promoted by the "Among Ourselves" column clearly values brevity, a writing practice that the editor links to the space that has been bought in the magazine.

If letters must be brief in order to be included in the column, it is also true that they must appeal to the tastes of the editor and other readers. Just as Bok, Wiley, and Dixey assert so often in their articles concerning writing for the press that writers need to consider the value and appeal their writing will have for the consumer market, so too in the "Among Ourselves" column must *Journal* correspondents seek to ensure that their letter will appeal to magazine consumers. In "A Page of Girls' Questions," a short-lived attempt to offer younger readers a space to print their questions, the editor makes clear that a letter's potential to appeal to the consuming audience will determine whether or not it is published, explaining that "I am glad to answer, personally, every letter sent me, but I want to select a few letters this month out of my mail and discuss them with you right here on this page of ours: letters which set forth questions that it will benefit us all to talk

over because they involve some of the ideals of girlhood” (31). “Among Ourselves” does not outline this practice so explicitly, but clearly operates on the same principle. As I will explore below, Abbott takes a great deal of control in pointing potential writers to new topics, in determining which topics are not appropriate for the community, and in shutting down conversations she no longer wishes to see published. However, it is also true that the writers themselves use precious space in their letters to point out why their topic is of interest to *Journal* readers and continue discussions that have proven popular by responding to previous letters. Most often, writers simply cite previous correspondents or an issue that has appeared elsewhere in the *Journal*; however, beginning in March 1891, readers begin what becomes an ongoing effort in the “Among Ourselves” community to share and distribute magazines among themselves and less fortunate women. One writer describes her policy of saving old magazines and sending them out to others in her community; in the next few issues, then, readers respond to this idea, one reader in noting that “in my own house, I have for years gathered weekly newspapers and sent them to friends in isolated places, who, being deprived of society, long for the companionship which comes through reading, and yet by reason of the exigencies of life, cannot spend money to buy books or papers” (May 1891, 26). Abbott commends the practice, and in this way, readers use the space of the column to assert some control over how the magazine can be re-distributed outside the market. Indeed, it would be a mistake to characterize the entirety of the *Journal* and the exchanges in the “Among Ourselves” column as linking with what was, admittedly, a rather overt consumer agenda. As B. D. Snyder asserts in her article on the “Just Among Ourselves,” “Confidence Women: Female Culture and Community in ‘Just Among Ourselves’ and

*Ladies Home Journal*,” the writers “combined within its column a rhetoric of commerce and sanctuary simultaneously” and were able to build a sense of community through their narratives (315).

My concern, however, is primarily with the way the magazine itself situated the writing of its readers. And while the “Among Ourselves” column did allow women to establish communal interchanges, it is nevertheless equally true to that Abbott retains a great deal of visible control over the words of her readers and even the overall content of the column; although a column ostensibly created by readers’ correspondence, it is obvious that readers have not purchased free space for their words, but that the column, like other departments, is constructed by the editor. In the September 1890 issue, for instance, Abbott, who offers commentary following every letter – with the length of her own contribution sometimes equaling and exceeding that of the correspondent – brings two separate topics to a close. Responding to a letter citing an ongoing conversation about left-handedness in children, the editor notes that “to judge from the large package of letters received, I should think that the majority of people were born left-handed. Perhaps we have now accumulated all the advice which is necessary on this subject, and we will not give more space to it” (12). At the same time, another writer’s letter appears under the heading “Final Words About Cockroaches” and the editor’s preface that “with this final suggestion we hope the last roaches may be destroyed, and we shall hear no more of them” (12). Abbott does not simply take responsibility for concluding discussions; she also claims authority for suggesting topics as well, as in one issue where she asks: “What do you think, sisters, about the best way of managing a family library? Is it a good plan to put the books into a common stock, or is it better to have each member



of the family own the little store to be kept in one's own room? The books are certainly an education and I think that would be one good topic for us to talk about together" (Oct. 1890; 14). In this respect, the column's editor articulates the type of submissions she wishes to receive (and those she does not), positioning letter-writers less as readers entering an exchange, as the column's initial proposal insists, and framing them more as writers entering the intimate, but still consumer, *Journal* marketplace. That readers of the magazine and therefore the column had already been established as consumers further supported this construction.

#### *Purchasing Subscriptions for Literacy*

If, according to the *Journal*'s conception, literacy is dispensed through institutions and written texts are produced for and consumed by readers, then literacy is also something that has to be purchased in some way. Correspondingly, the periodical does not restrict its portrayal of buyers to *Journal* readers, nor consumption to the practice of reading; throughout the periodical's many considerations of the possible education of its readers, students of all kinds are consistently framed as buyers in an educational market. Importantly, however, just as Mabie in his reading instruction and Bok, Dixey, and Wiley in their writing advice suggest that as consumer-readers and writer-salespersons women have critical control over the choices they make in their literacy experiences, so too does the *Journal* suggest that students can exert control over their educational choices, as is most visible in the magazine's scholarship program.

It is clear, of course, in the "Just Among Ourselves" column that correspondents are negotiating commercial space in the magazine, budgeting space for editors' comments, reader letters, and advertisements. But this is not the only place in the

*Journal* where readers are framed as participants in a market economy, buying into the magazine's communal and educational opportunities. Bok's well-publicized "free scholarship" students have earned their opportunity to attend college (and have their story appear in the magazine itself) by selling subscriptions, a fact which, far from underplaying, Bok and the *Journal* repeatedly emphasize. Though the articles focusing on scholarship winners refer to the subscription competition as a "slight service,"<sup>28</sup> they nonetheless spend noticeable space describing that service, and the success and initiative of the entrepreneurial student. In fact, in 1892, the *Journal* printed a supplemental booklet describing in detail how future readers could obtain a scholarship: "there will be found in this booklet a complete explanation of the offers, and just how they can be secured. Some twenty of the successful girls have been induced to tell the stories of their success in winning the offers" ("Girls of Whom," 12). The *Journal* notably emphasizes the story of how readers "purchased" their scholarship, rather than their ultimate experience as a student. However, in doing so, the magazine focuses on young readers' abilities as saleswomen, even pointing out that those who lost out on the scholarship still earned an income – as all competitors were compensated (25 cents) for each subscriptions they solicited. Alternatively, a 1906 article advertises that any reader may enter a program through which she can earn books in exchange for the subscriptions she collects. In this way, like the scholarship winners, readers are both buyers of their own literacy experiences and responsible for selling literacy to others.

This tendency toward focusing readers and students as skillful buyers and sellers is equally visible in other places where the periodical discusses college life. While *The Ladies' Home Journal* addresses education frequently, it most often does so in terms of

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<sup>28</sup> This is a bit of an understatement given the number of subscriptions required to win: over a thousand.

children – or at least, frames the discussion in a way that situates the reader as the parent of the student, at whatever level. Throughout the term of Bok's editorship, the magazine published voluminously on the topic of educating children in the home and overseeing their progress in school. However, the *Journal* also published articles about young women attending colleges, directing these discussions at readers who were either entering their first years as college students or who hoped to attend college in the future, possibly by earning a *Journal* scholarship. These articles do often emphasize how higher education may help or hinder a young woman's (inevitable) move toward middle-class motherhood, a pet dilemma of Bok's, but just as frequently devote themselves to educating readers on how a college education may be funded. A series of four articles that ran in 1893, "The Girl Who Goes to College" by Anna Robertson Brown, outline a number of important issues for readers about to enter college; each one discusses cost. The first article briefly describes what to expect in terms of "course costs" and, in greater detail, lists the personal possessions a college student will need to purchase and bring with her. The second, in a section right before "The Best Way to Study," discusses "Self-Support at College" and the "several ways in which a girl may provide for part of her expenses" (22). In 1904, a more overtly titled succession of articles, "How Six Girls Worked Their Way Through College," appeared in the *Journal* depicting success stories not of attending college, but of endeavoring to pay for it. In these articles, young women attending various colleges, describe in detail the jobs they held, the amount of money earned, and the exact costs of their tuition and living expenses. Similar stories occasionally appear in the reader-supplied "Side Talks with Girls" column and in articles such as "How We Saved" (Jan. 1903) and "How a Girl Can Work Her Way Through

College” (Aug. 1900) that foreground students’ roles as consumers of education, but also, importantly, cast young women as being responsible in some way for earning that education. Not connected quite as directly to education, a column “The Girls’ Club: With One Idea: To Make Money” focused, as its title states, on ways young women could earn money, primarily through selling subscriptions and learning from other *Journal* readers, for “why shouldn’t girls have some of the money that men make by the hundreds of dollars, yes, by the hundreds of dollars, from a magazine that wholly belongs to the American girl and the American woman?” (40). The column does not ascribe a purpose to the money earned, at times referring to it as pin money, but at others mentioning education and the ability to buy more books.

It is in columns and articles such as these that the *Journal* repeatedly sought to portray its readers and students as buyers, but also where the magazine encouraged readers to exert control over the choices they made as consumers and as sellers in the literacy market. As numerous historians have demonstrated, the structure of the magazine as a whole – not the least of which through the advertisements – situated female readers as ideal American consumers; it is equally true, however, that in competing in the scholarship program, interacting with Mabie’s “Literary Talks,” and writing for editors like “Aunt Patience,” *Journal* readers are depicted as active participants, rather than passive recipients, in the consumer market. In *Magazines for the Millions*, Damon-Moore explores the role of capitalism and consumption in the periodical at length, illustrating how first the Curtises and later Bok constructed a gendered consumer culture wherein the female reader was tutored in her role as the consumer of the household; Damon-Moore argues that “Knapp [Louisa Knapp-Curtis] and her staff

believed that increased consuming was a concrete way for women to expand their activity and gain some autonomy that could be satisfying and even fun” (55). While explorations of the magazine’s advertisements – and the trend-setting practices the Curtis Publishing Company and Edward Bok initiated in magazine advertising – certainly offers ample material for considering how *The Ladies’ Home Journal* encouraged readers in adopting their consumer roles, I would argue that in the subscription collection programs, in the advice the magazine provided on writing for the public, and in the writing it encouraged in correspondence columns, the *Journal* offered readers opportunities to participate in multiple ways in what they termed the literacy or “literary trade.” More pointedly, throughout the various literacy experiences Bok and the *Journal* imagined for their audience, readers are credited with both having and desiring a high level of literacy. Thus, the *Journal*’s goal was certainly to educate readers on literacy in a consumer era, but it was also providing women with the knowledge they would need to determine how they would participate.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPECIAL INVITATION TO WRITE: MAGAZINE READERS AS CONTRIBUTORS

“I highly value the ‘Young Folks’ column, not because its contents are superior to the rest, but because the articles are written by young people – those who are just commencing a course of action and pursuits in life. The pen is the instrument of power, and those who learn to use it will have means in their hands that will educate and bless their fellowmen. The learning how to use the pen is one of the most important branches of education.”

*The Maine Farmer*, November 1885

“No agricultural paper in the land has begun to do as much as *The Ohio Farmer* has in the way of hunting up men and women unknown as writers, and making them known in tens of thousands of farm houses through the value of their writings. We seem to ourselves almost as eager to discover writers of that kind as Columbus was to discover America, or Grant to find a way to Richmond. Of all things we would not discourage any writer who has valuable facts or experience to communicate.”

*The Ohio Farmer*, August 15, 1895

In an article simply titled, “Farm Experience,” in the November 1880 issue of *The Ohio Farmer*, the editor reminds readers of his “standing invitation” for them to contribute to any and all departments in the magazine. He recognizes, however, that his audience now consists of thousands of readers “who have never had a special invitation to write” (203). *The Ohio Farmer*, according to its own (repeated) account, sets out to amend this omission by ensuring that farmers and their families, “the learned and the illiterate,” understand their responsibility to contribute to and participate in publications like *The Ohio Farmer*. It hopes that readers recognize the irreplaceable knowledge and

authority farmers themselves have on what the magazine sees as the developing scientific industry of agriculture, *The Ohio Farmer* seeks to make sure that the magazine is constructed in large part by reader contributions, imploring the audience: “let no one hesitate to write because he has not been educated at college” (203). The call expressed here is not unique to *The Ohio Farmer*. A wide range of farming publications at this time urge farmers to contribute to the agricultural press, visibly connecting involvement in an agricultural community with improved literacy. For these farming publications, therefore, the readers’ interaction with the magazine was both a part of their literacy education and an important part of their development as participants in an advancing agricultural community. To this end, just as the agricultural press continuously reported on the social and educational responsibilities of Grange organizations, the editors (and contributors) of these magazines took responsibility for advocating the particular ways the magazine was to be read and constructed by its audience. This engagement with the magazine was illustrated as being a part of readers’ life-long education in agriculture and participation in the welfare of their community – the two primary goals for literacy education reinforced by these publications. These values formed the foundation for how farming journals justified the purpose of advanced literacy for their readers and underscored the discourse values outlined by the magazines.

Ultimately, as I will explore in the following chapter, in placing so much importance on the contributions of their reading audience, two particular farming magazines, *Maine* and *Ohio*, went further in soliciting compositions by intervening in the literacy education of readers, insisting that magazine readers needed to be taught how to become writers of the agricultural press. In this mission, these two journals provided

readers with a journal-specific definition of good writing that valued content over style, brevity over length, and above all fact-based discourse designed to inform readers. Invention, for these writers, was illustrated as a product of scientifically-based farm experience and engaged reading of agricultural publications. In the sections that follow, I will consider the numerous articles contained in *Maine* and *Ohio Farmer* that sought both to encourage and teach prospective writers, focusing on the writing pedagogy they fostered, one that stressed the value of learning to write through repeated practice in a purposeful context.

*“It is your magazine”: Turn-of-the-Century Farming Publications*

Although they reveal differences in terms of tone and content that I will point to later, *The Maine Farmer* and *The Ohio Farmer* are alike in their perceptions of their rural audiences, their emphasis on a specific, state community, and their relation to other, similar agricultural journals popular in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, farming publications in general, and these in particular, saw it as their purpose to educate and inform their rural readers not only on farming matters, but also on issues surrounding the household and, especially, important matters of state government. In terms of content, farming journals and newspapers obviously included a great deal of material on livestock, crops, agricultural machinery, and Grange meetings, but they also included sections devoted to children, household matters, and local, social issues. In “The Social Significance of the Agricultural Press” (1912), J. Clyde Marquis credits advancements in farming technology and management to the growth of agricultural papers and magazines after 1830, and the journals themselves state clearly that practical advice and education were the main purpose for circulation. This objective is clear in statements like *Ohio’s*



“Mission of the Agricultural Paper,” as well as in “Why Take Agricultural Papers” in *Southern Planter*, where a contributor, W. M. King, claims that:

agriculture does not stand still, and it is well to learn, as soon as possible, the best ways and means, as time is short, and no man has time to try everything for himself. It is for this reason that all papers devoted to the dissemination of current agricultural facts should receive the hearty support of the farming community. . . . To elevate the standard of farming by making it more intensive is the true mission of the agricultural press (128-9).

While contributors to farming journals debated education continuously, they did so in a manner far different from what is visible in the nationally circulating women’s magazines. Whereas the women’s magazines I consider provide examples the schooling experiences of readers, but deal more frequently with larger ideals and educational issues, state or community-specific farming journals do not separate debates over education from the specific circumstances of their more local audiences. As with everything else in the journal, debates over schooling center on locally specific subjects. Contributors to *Michigan*, *Southern Planter*, *New England Farmer*, *Farmer’s Home Journal*, *Maine* and *Ohio*, in particular, are as concerned with the practical matters of what happens in their schools as they are with the very real question of how that education is being paid for – in both money and time – by parents and tax-payers, listing actual tax rates and book prices where necessary. While *Harper’s Bazar* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* envisioned a middle-class, urban, female audience, farming publications needed to cater to the entire family. Even if, as in the case of *The Ohio Farmer*, the majority of the publication caters to farming matters, with separate Youth and Household sections overtly assigned to the women and children of the family, farming magazines assumed that the audience for each issue of the magazine was a family, rather than an individual. In *Maine Farmer* this is

even more apparent, with a more equal balance between pointed discussions of crops and livestock, and family and community matters. *Harper's Bazaar* may address a relatively consistent "she," but the *Farmers* speak to fellow "boys and girls," "sisters," and fellow farmers or Grange members in every issue. In general, this audience make-up was typical for other farming publications, both those specific to other states and the larger national magazines.

Moreover, agricultural magazines imagined an audience that did not have the leisure time or disposable income that their *Journal* and *Bazaar* counter-parts were assumed to possess. This is not to say that *Farmer* readers were not also subscribers to the *Bazaar* or *Journal*; in fact, given the circulation figures for the *Journal* some of them certainly were. However, while both *Harper's Bazaar* and *Ladies' Home Journal* made obviously class-based assumptions about their female readers – that they were the wives and daughters of professional men, that higher education for men was a given and higher education for women a not-impossible ideal, and that women did not need to work outside the home – this group of farming journals made very different assumptions about their audiences. In short, articles in farming publications demonstrated that editors imagined their readers did not have much leisure time, that all male and female members of the family needed to contribute to farm labor, and that education, while important, was a luxury beyond the primary years – "as only six out of every one hundred children have the advantage of what we call higher education, the important question arises, what is the duty of the State to the ninety-four percent?" ("Rural School Problem," 402). Paired with the genuine concern journals continuously expressed for the basic educational opportunities offered within the state – whether in common schools, libraries, or Grange

organizations – are the two somewhat divergent beliefs that a classical higher education is suspect in its ability to adequately prepare young men for lives in farming communities and that farmers and their families need to embrace more advanced education in order to “keep pace” with the rest of the nation. Both these beliefs, as I will explore later, overtly shaped the kind of literacy work the magazines sponsored for the benefit of their readers. In 1884 *Michigan Farmer*, for instance, outlines many of the fears also expressed in other agricultural journals about the compatibility of a classical college education for farmers’ sons, and the corresponding desirability of an education at an agricultural college. S.N.B. of Lansing,<sup>29</sup> a contributor, asserts that “as soon as we farmers can get rid of the foolish notion, that there is no thorough education without a knowledge of the classics, the sooner will we feel able to give a greater number of our sons a thoroughly practical training that will be helpful to them on the farm, or in the office or factory” (“Education of Our Boys,” 1). For S.N.B., “a college course arranged and a college equipped especially for their benefit” is not only more practical financially, but also academically, as he believes that it is at universities, unlike technical or agricultural colleges, “where scientific courses are esteemed inferior to the classical” (1). Part of the value of a scientific and experience-based education, according to farming journals, is that it does not preclude literary and rhetorical advancement, either; S.N.B., remarking on the orations given at a recent graduation from an agricultural college, claims that “we have proof that the accuracy of thought and expression, which must be exercised in every

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<sup>29</sup> Like other farming journals, *Michigan* publishes the writing of audience members throughout all sections of the paper, and does not restrict the comments of contributors to specific correspondence columns. Moreover, while some articles are signed, as this one, with a city of origin, presumably denoting that the writer is a contributor rather than an editor, other articles are left unsigned. Thus, it is not always clear who is writing what articles. Here, and throughout, I will always mark where an article is presumably written by a contributor. Likewise, as I will explore below, I will also note where the article is ostensibly written by an editor.

day's work, in the laboratory and class-room and work on the farm, lead to as elegant and forcible use of language as can be acquired by the old classical courses, which have long been claimed as essentials to good writing and forcible oratory" (1).

According to S.N.B., and the other publications I studied, advanced literacy skills – ideally acquired through intellectual interaction in the home, in Grange organizations, and through published literature – are fundamental to improving life in farming communities, advancing agricultural knowledge, and elevating perceptions of farming. S.N.B. argues that “it must be admitted that if the educated farmer is to make his influence most felt, and if he is to hold his place alongside of the men in other professions, he must become a forcible speaker as well as writer” (1). At the same time, in *Michigan Farmer*, the editor makes clear that “it is a question of whether the farmer is to ‘keep up with the procession.’ If he is to do so, his children must be better educated than he was” (“The Editor’s Table,” 422). These kinds of publications evince a strong sense of individual readers’ responsibility for self-improvement, as a means of advancing their involvement in agricultural and community matters. For adults, this self-improvement, significantly, is something that grows out of domestic reading habits, participation in the educational practices of the Grange, and, more pointedly, active interaction and contribution to the farming journals themselves. Although, as I will explore, *Maine* and *Ohio* are more vocal (and pedagogical) in their encouragements to new writers, the vast majority of farming publications like *Farmer’s Home Journal*, *New England Farmer*, and *Southern Planter* are equally adamant that farmers have a responsibility to contribute to the agricultural press, so that others might benefit from their practical experience. W. W. Stevens, a contributor to *Farmer’s Home Journal*,

sums up this argument by claiming “we often wonder why it is that farmers who are energetic, sensible and practical, do not write more than they do for their favorite agricultural paper, giving the results of experiments, practical thoughts and reasonable suggestions, that others might read and be benefitted thereby” (561).

These journals frame their calls for readers to become writers as a more literate form of the intellectual interaction a “good farmer” already sees as important for his success. In *Maine Farmer*’s “Book Farming,” a contributor, W, situates discussion of farming practices as a naturally occurring learning experience, claiming that “a good farmer leans over the fence to rest and talk with his neighbor, and they tell each other the what and how of their crops. It’s a cheery talk, and they learn mutually” (1). But he adds that “this is a day of newspapers and books,” and that farmers need to respond by turning to the press, for “when it is in print it is only that talk over the fence dressed up a little for a larger audience, and a good many learn by it instead of one” (1). For W, reading the journal is a responsible extension of the educational “talk over the fence,” and he suggests to would-be writers the role they can take in benefitting others. Articles written by editors and contributors alike in other farming journals, like “Farm Experience,” “Writing for the Paper,” and “Neglected Tool” further assert that, as authorities on agricultural subjects, farmer-readers have a responsibility to join the printed discussion. The editor of “Farm Experience” explains to readers the position they hold in the field of agriculture, arguing that “a busy life of practical experience on a farm with a proper exercise of energy and observation, constitutes farmers the highest authority in matters relating to their peculiar branch of the industry,” an assertion supported by so many of the

writing-focused articles of the journal that call for readers to impart the expertise they have gained from experience (203). He goes on to maintain, moreover, that:

American farmers best the world in their willingness to impart information thro' the agricultural press, but there is room for improvement yet. Thousands of them can hardly be induced to put pen to paper for this purpose, and many more refuse to aid in the work of disseminating knowledge thro public organizations such as farmers clubs (203).

Farmers' refusal "to aid in the work of disseminating knowledge" impedes the greater trend of American farmers towards increasing the value of the agricultural press; in "Neglected Tool," the editor works from a similar belief by also criticizing experienced farmers for withholding knowledge. He argues that "these old, veteran farmers who have never written a word for agriculture, have accumulated from many years' experience and observation, a fund of practical knowledge and information that would be eminently useful, could they be persuaded to impart it to the world" (369). Ultimately, not only is the learning of individual members of the audience at stake in the composition efforts of these "old veteran farmers," but also the progress of agriculture as a field. "Neglected Tool" articulates this by casting writing as an "implement" of agriculture, asserting that "as a general thing, farmers know how to handle any other agricultural implement better than the pen; and yet that little tool is the most powerful of them all. We call it an agricultural implement, for what has it not done for agriculture?" (369). In *New England Farmer*, similarly, Geo H. Brown, a reader of the publication, argues that "I think farmers make a great mistake by neglecting to make the agricultural press a medium of their ideas upon farm topics" because "if we learn a good thing, not lock it up in a safe nor get it patented and try to live by the sale of the article, but send an account to our paper, and thereby make it common property, and then agricultural knowledge will increase" (1).

This same article is later reprinted in *Southern Planter* with the editor's note that he feels the same, a concept he expands upon in "Farmers as Writers and Executors" where he discusses the reasons why articles written by experienced farmers offer such value. He, too, frames the need for farmers to write as a social responsibility:

The excuse we most often hear given by farmers when asked to communicate their views on any agricultural topic is, that they are not in the habit of writing for the papers, and that it is more agreeable to read what others write than to attempt to write themselves. This is a grave error, for if all were to act on this principle there would be nothing valuable in agricultural journals, and they might as well cease to exist. The principle, too, will not bear the test of moral obligation, for he who receives ought to be willing to give . . . there is no greater obligation or necessity among farmers than that they should teach and learn of each other (413).

Here, as in other farm journals, the moral inflection given to literacy skills is not that they reflect on the moral constitution of the individual, but that they enable that person to enter into a responsible community of professionals. W.W. Stevens, in *Farmer's Home Journal*, further asserts that magazine editors cannot fill the gap left by farmers unwilling to contribute to the agricultural press, arguing that "most editors of agricultural papers are more theoretical than practical, and are hardly competent to give the inquiring farmer information in detail, such as is most desired and such as will profit him most" (561).

The writers and editors in *Southern Planter*, *New England Farmer*, and *Farmer's Home Journal*, moreover, join *Michigan*, *Maine* and *Ohio* in suggesting that agricultural publications at their best are, in fact, composed by their readers. While many, perhaps even most, periodicals published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries contained columns designed to include the contributions of readers – correspondence columns like those discussed in the previous chapters – all of these publications were, on the whole, mediums for the writing of professionals for an amateur audience. The agricultural

journals, even as early as 1850, are unique then in their portrayal of themselves as outlets for the writing of professional farmers, as forums for the articles of both professional and non-professional writers. *Maine Farmer* and *Ohio Farmer*, in particular, make it their goal to publish the work of “men and women unknown as writers,” and in doing so point to a set of discursive values specific to the agricultural press. They also point to a gap between the advanced literacy education offered in schools and the literacy skills needed in farming communities, a disconnect *Maine* and *Ohio* attempted to bridge by offering readers help in composing articles. While it is clear that a wide range of farming publications argued for the value of farmer-submitted writing, *Maine* and *Ohio* are unique for the pedagogical turn they take in providing these prospective writers with encouragement and advice. In the sections that follow, I consider how these two publications reassure reluctant writers by defining what good writing means for their audience, and how this understanding of writing shapes the composition rules the magazines offer.

*“Hunting up men and women unknown as writers”: Encouraging Readers to Become Writers*

For both *Ohio* and *Maine*, especially, the call for farmers and members of their families to write for the journal is important to some of their most foundational publication objectives: to provide an educational resource for those involved in agricultural work, to act as a medium of debate on farming techniques and issues, and to promote the field of agriculture as a science by publishing the experience-based scholarship of farmers themselves. To accomplish such goals, *Ohio* continuously publishes “invitations” for readers to write, reminding the audience that the quality of the journal is determined by its readers’ interaction with it, and one another. To this end,



*Maine* and *Ohio* spend a great deal of time defining for their readers the kind of writer who will be valued in the agricultural community by emphasizing the goals and values of the agricultural press. In short, arguing that knowledge dissemination is the primary purpose for writing, these periodicals depict the ideal writer as an experienced practitioner concerned about his community.

For *Ohio*, the policy of (doggedly) soliciting compositions from the reading public is a point of pride, as editors seek to convince readers they fear do not consider themselves writers that they are. In an 1895 issue, the editor boasts that “no agricultural paper in the land has begun to do as much as The Ohio Farmer has in the way of hunting up men and women unknown as writers, and making them known in tens of thousands of farm houses through the value of their writings. We seem to ourselves almost as eager to discover writers of that kind as Columbus was to discover America, or Grant to find a way to Richmond” (“The King’s English – Once More,” 103). *Ohio Farmer* “hunts” these unknown writers repeatedly in their solicitations for readers to write, showing readers the service they can undertake for the agricultural community. The “value of their writings” is stressed again and again as being educational for both reader and writer. In “The King’s English – Once More,” the editor makes this clear as well, citing the inherent value of the experience and expertise readers may convey to fellow farmers through their compositions, adding that “of all things we would not discourage any writer who has valuable facts or experience to communicate” (103). For *Ohio*, the writer of the article benefits educationally as well; referring to the process of drafting compositions for agricultural journals, the editor of “A Neglected Tool” assures readers that:

one good thing about these mental efforts is that they are reflexive. It is impossible to exercise the mind systematically without improving it.

Every succeeding effort becomes easier and more successful. Thus, by a wise arrangement of the Creator, whenever we attempt to instruct others, we benefit ourselves. Try it, friends, and see if we do not speak truly (369).

Although lengthy invitations to write are not common in *Maine Farmer*, the journal nonetheless makes clear that members of its audience are encouraged (and even expected) to want to contribute, as is visible in editorials and frequent articles giving advice to contributors. Like *Ohio*, *Maine Farmer* articulates the purpose of readers' contributions in terms of the educational value it may hold for other readers. In an 1877 article, "Writing for the Public," one reader-contributor, Quercus Alba, offers his understanding of the journal's perspectives on the value of compositions by explaining that:

what young farmers want is practical advice from practical men, men whose opinions they are bound to respect. There are farmers who with their pens, can, in an hour, impart to the young farmer as much on a certain subject as they can learn in a lifetime of study and experience. And what a great benefit to the beginner to commence with the advantage of the experience of a lifetime gained in this manner (1).

Alba insists that this knowledge should derive from experience rather than book knowledge, and the only commentary the editor adds to Alba's outline of the value of reader contributions is to add, in a note at the end of the article, that "nevertheless, our columns are always open to all well written articles coming within the scope of our journal from any responsible source" (1). Exactly what constitutes a "responsible source" is not described here, but nearly all articles discussing and giving advice on writing for the agricultural press stress that writers need to draw from their own reading and practice, basing their writing either on their own success or open inquiries for further debate and advice. Over and over, mixed in with suggestions for writing and advice for writing well,

these publications stress the responsibility prospective writers should feel for imparting knowledge to others and for adding to a growing published account on the science of agriculture.

In order to solicit submissions from these kinds of writers – those who are interested in being an active participant in their field and are knowledgeable about it – the editors of both *Ohio* and *Maine* offer a great deal of practical advice to readers on their contributions, outlining both the goals for publication, as well as articulating strategies for invention and determining content and advice on grammar and language, as I will consider in the next section. At the same time, many of these articles are visibly preoccupied with the reluctance they imagine readers feel about writing something for publication. In “A Neglected Tool” in *Ohio Farmer*, the editor acknowledges that the “majority of farmers, even those who read and are intelligent, use the pen too little in behalf of their own profession. They can *talk* well enough, but ask them to *write* out the same thing they have told you, and they will excuse themselves” (369, emphasis in original). The article, which continues to offer advice to reluctant writers, offers an anecdote of a particularly successful farmer who “lost no time in telling us that he ‘never wrote a line for a paper – couldn’t write,’ etc. Now his *talk* was practical, useful, interesting, and his writing would have been equally so – but the idea, to him, was preposterous” (369). Believing that one “cannot write” is not an excuse, for *Ohio*, for not attempting to draft articles for their journal. A later article, “Farm Experience,” clearly expounds on this belief, complaining that more readers do not write because “one common excuse is they cannot express themselves properly, but this is a poor one” (203). For the editor, the reason that this “excuse” is not adequate is because:

the most effective writers and speakers use the simplest language. Our correspondent before referred to spoke the sentiment of every sensible reader when he said, "I like to read those articles on farm topics whose burden of information is expressed in the plain and simple language of the practical farmer, who understands his business and aims to make himself understood to the illiterate as well as the learned." Let no one hesitate to write because he has not been educated at college (203).

Here, as in other articles encouraging readers to write, the editor defines for readers what "good writing" means for the publication: "effective writers and speakers use the simplest language," it imparts professional wisdom to other farmers, and is accessible to all readers. The editor is not alone in insisting that the readers of farm journals should not shy away from composing for the press because they have "not been educated at college" or are only comfortable using "the plain and simple language of the practical farmer"; even as the numerous articles contained in *Maine* and *Ohio* seek to help readers improve their writing skills, these same articles reinforce the idea that the journals and their audiences are receptive to the efforts of learning and first-time writers. So, articles focusing on grammar and conciseness reiterate the fact that flawed language will not preclude the editors from accepting a submission for publication; that content, not style, determines the value of a piece of writing. Moreover, as I will address below, these two journals insisted that the practice of writing possible articles and letters for the magazine – or *Grange* – would help readers improve their skill and comfort levels with writing. Significantly, too, even where readers expressed concern over the journal's attention to grammar, editors worked to frame their grammar lessons as a further means of encouraging reluctant writers, rather than as a deterrent for incorrect writing. For example, one respondent to a series of articles on grammar entitled, "The King's English," conceded that "I hope they will do me good and make me more careful in my

writing,” but added that because of such articles encouraging readers to improve grammar, “I fear that many an earnest farmer, not learned in ‘the king’s English,’ will be deterred by them from giving us his conclusions drawn from a lifetime’s experience and observation and hence of very great value” (103). The editor, in response, assured his audience that nearly all other responses to “The King’s English” series were positive, and reasserted the journal’s commitment to encouraging reluctant writers to try to get published. He then reminds readers of the reason *Ohio* included grammatical advice at all, claiming that while editors do not wish to discourage any writer, they acknowledge that “some of our valued practical writers had few early opportunities in the way of education” and that some readers might wish to improve their grammar, though this should not define whether or not they write:

If they will send us specific facts and conclusions from their own recent work, experience or observation, clearly expressed in short words and compact sentences, we are content. . . . These hints are given for your benefit, not as criticisms. We assume that you desire to improve in writing as well as in farming, and we are simply offering to help you (130).

In the sections that follow, in which I explore the specific writing lessons offered by these publications, subtle distinctions between articles will be obvious, even as it is equally clear that they do lean toward a loose consensus: that valuable composition springs from experience and engaged reading habits, that readers could learn to write by writing, that content rather than style determines value, and that improved literacy skills held practical value for rural audiences.

*“Read the articles in the Farmer carefully”: Prompts for Composition*

In hopes of encouraging the, perhaps reluctant, audience to begin writing, both *Maine* and *Ohio* offer possible topics and a strategy for invention, outlining for readers

the kind of content valued in the agricultural press. In “Hints to Correspondents,” an editor admits that they are “often asked by correspondents for some suggestions respecting writing for the press and for subjects to write upon,” and reminds readers that “the articles of the most value to the readers of our paper are those written because the author has something important to tell. Then to find a subject, it is only necessary to recall the experiences of life in which discoveries have been made that have benefitted you” (26).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in “Farm Experience,” the editor of *Ohio* puts forth:

an urgent request that every one contribute something to these pages from the fund of practical information which they have gathered by years of labor and management on the farm. We endorse the sentiment expressed by one of our correspondents, recently. “A busy life of practical experience on a farm with a proper exercise of energy and observation, constitutes farmers the highest authority in matters relating to their peculiar branch of the industry” (203).

For both *Ohio* and *Maine* the desired content of contributions is practical information on or points of inquiry into farming matters, a topic on which both magazines argue their readers are experts. In this way, the advice to “write from experience” is constantly repeated, and while the advice offered here is vague, in other places, such as “The Neglected Tool,” specific topical prompts are given for readers, pointing them toward places to look: their crop yeild, or dairy and stock notes, or accounts of Grange matters. More specifically, and even more frequently, audiences are urged to use their reading of agricultural papers to prompt writing topics.

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<sup>30</sup> Few of these articles are signed. The collection of articles I consider here that offer advice on grammar and style, and encourage readers to contribute to the journal, are all written from the perspective of one of the editors of the magazines. It is equally true, however, that articles published in these journals, those related to farming rather than writing matters, do not consistently name an author either: some offering no name and others giving name and county. Thus, the men and women who did ultimately answer *Ohio Farmer* and *Maine Farmer*’s call for contributors could remain as anonymous as they chose. For a reluctant writer, this might have offered further inducement to contribute, though this possibility was never advertised in the articles focused on writing.

Just as *Michigan Farmer*, as I touched on in chapter 2, urged readers to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered through participation in Grange meetings, libraries, and study groups, and demonstrated to them both the different forms their participation might take and how these activities would be beneficial to improving knowledge, comfort with writing, and public speaking skills, *Maine* and *Ohio* likewise encouraged audiences to read more often and outlined specific reading practices they should cultivate, especially for reading the farming journals themselves. Most frequently, illustrations of ideal reading practices took place in a domestic setting – or, at the very least, on home property, with farm workers encouraged to read outside during breaks and discuss recent articles “over the fence” with their neighbors. The setting was an important part of the conviction expressed in *Maine* and *Ohio* that literate and intellectual development could occur more successfully in real life contexts than classrooms. Students in school were assigned generic readers, which various articles in both *Farmers* accused of being unable to hold readers’ attention, while adults read newspapers, journals, and books connected with their life pursuits; students studied grammar, which a number of contributors to these journals doubted could help improve actual writing skills, while adults wrote letters, articles, and notes for Grange discussions. I will address how this belief about writing pedagogy played into the writing practices advocated by the farming journals in the section below; in terms of reading practices, however, *Maine* and *Ohio* reinforced the idea that parents needed to support reading habits at home and should undertake their own development as readers in the same context. More significantly for this discussion, however, while numerous farming journals illustrated reading practices as an important step in self-education and participation in community-based groups like the

grange, *Maine* and *Ohio* further established reading as a part of invention; their journal audiences were to use their reading experiences as prompts for further literate interaction.

In keeping with *Maine*'s and *Ohio*'s trend of sympathetically recognizing impediments – including perceived lack of skill – to writing for publication, discussions of reading also continuously returned to the journal's acknowledgement that audience members did not have a great deal of time to devote to lengthy reading. They repeatedly reminded readers, however, that the winter months offered more opportunities. During this time, these and other farming magazines made clear the conscientious farmers and their families should devote themselves to a reading or study plan, and that farming periodicals could help them prepare. *Michigan Farmer*, especially, devotes the most time to clubs and study groups, reinforces the importance of viewing the winter months as a time of self-cultivation; articles like "The Winter's Educational Campaign" in an October 1904 issue, "How Can We Profitably Spend Our Winter Evenings" in a March 1905 issue, and "Farm Home Reading" in an April 1907 issue all suggest this. Mary Jolis, in "How Can We," claims that she "can recommend no more profitable way to spend our winter evenings than by reading and studying," adding directions for how families may read together: "If the housewife is busily engaged in sewing, mending or fancy needlework, as a great many of our sisters are, let the husband, father or brother, as the case may be, read aloud and all may enjoy the reading at the same time" (210). In "Reading for Farmers and How Some Farmers Read," I.N. Cowdry, in *Ohio*, likewise portrays winter evenings as the best time for farmers to read (and study), recalling how he "love[s] to sit down these long winter nights and read the experiences of different writers of *The Farmer* . . . how much one can learn, how many little suggestions he can cull



from the pens of many excellent contributors” (262). Similarly, another contributor, A.B. Lightner, in “Farmer’s Notions About Agricultural Journals” in *Southern Planter and Farmer* laments that not enough farmers read the agricultural press carefully, and “if the hard-working farmer would read more and work less (I mean the hard-working man), he would succeed far better” (561). *Ohio* argues in “Mission of the Agricultural Paper” that the agricultural press exists for the purpose of providing farmers with a practical education that they can get through reading at home. The editor here argues that:

no one can read such a paper as The Ohio Farmer without getting ten times its cost from it . . . it is exactly the same as with drill and discipline of an educational course. One is not conscious, from day to day, of the broadening, elevating process, but the four or five year’s course develops the powers within and makes the man. And so with the close reader of a reliable agricultural journal (290).

As with other discussions of education and home reading in the agricultural press, the ability of higher academic institutions to provide educational development superior to what a motivated student may achieve on his or her own is questioned.<sup>31</sup> This is especially clear in *Maine* in “Agricultural Education at Home.” G. E. Monroe, a reader, asserts that farmers can “do much in the way of getting a good agricultural education without going to an agricultural college” because “farms are schools” and “farmers are teachers”; reading the agricultural papers, in particular, is of course “one of the very best means of acquiring an education at home” (1).

Just as *Ohio* and *Maine* ultimately acknowledge that members of their audience might find the prospect of writing for publication daunting, so too they recognize the

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<sup>31</sup> Partly because, as I will explore below, so much of these publications are taken up by contributions from their audiences, this message is not consistent. While some articles criticize college education, others clearly seek to make college a more achievable goal for students from rural communities. This idea, however, that higher education is not always successful at teaching the things farmers and their sons need to learn is present rather frequently in all three journals.

difficulties that might prevent farmers from reading the journal carefully, and learning from it. After relating the enjoyment he currently receives from reading the paper, I.N. Chowdry confesses that reading agricultural journals carefully requires effort and thought, as he discovered when he first subscribed: “I shall have to admit that the reading was dry, and I had to force it down quite hard; but I kept reading; first I fell in love with Terry, then Brown, Chamberlain, Gould, Talcott, Powers, etc., and at last The Farmer itself. So you see that some persons must educate themselves to read such papers” (262). A contributor to *Maine* in “What and How Shall We Read,” worries that even those farmers who have “educated themselves to read such papers” do not read them with enough care, and instead journals are “hastily run over and cast one side to be forgotten” (2). He urges readers to alter their reading practices to include study of the farming papers, something that can be achieved by family reading, a practice helpful in teaching children how to get in the practice of reading the *Farmer*. He suggests that “suppose a mother should, after the reading for the evening is over, listen to the review of each story as read by the young people, how easily wrong impressions could be corrected and good ones strengthened” (2). Chowdry, too, admits that, unfortunately, many farmers, claiming they lack the time, simply skim articles, and thus do not take advantage of the full educational value of publications such as *Ohio* or *Maine*.

To correct such a tendency, *Ohio Farmer* in particular encourages readers to read carefully, making sure to formulate and articulate the opinions inspired by the reading material in both family and Grange discussions, and in responses to the journal itself. After listing possible topics for writing, the author of “Neglected Tool” asks: “If you can do nothing more, ask questions for other readers to answer. If you read anything in our

columns that does or does not agree with your experience, let it be known. We want our readers to feel that The Ohio Farmer is *their* paper, to be used by them in every legitimate way” (369). Contributing to the journal, for “Neglected Tool” is about interacting with other readers, both in responding to what they have published and in eliciting further discussion in the journal. Likewise, the editor in “Farm Experience” calls for readers’ participation, stating: “Let us have a hearty support from every reader during the coming season of long nights and comparative leisure on the farm. Read the articles in The Farmer carefully, and if anything in them does not meet your approval, criticize it” (203). Here too, readers are encouraged to read for points of contention or omission, and to see periodical articles as a foundation for discussion points – points that they should use as inspiration for writing for magazine publication.

*“A benefit to all who are concerned therein”: Learning Through Practice*

Reflecting on a column in *Maine Farmer* that, for a number of years, was composed entirely of the letters and contributions of the younger members of the journal audience, D. Q. Cushman, himself a reader of the *Farmer*, claims that “writing is a great benefit and pleasure to us all, and I am glad that the *Farmer* has in it what they call the ‘young folks’ column,’ and I am glad that the young folks fill it so well as they do. And I could wish that other papers would do the same thing. It would be no damage, but in my judgment, be a benefit to all who are concerned therein” (“Original Occupation,” 1). While the “Young Folks’ Column” originally published stories presumably written by the journal’s staff, beginning in 1881, *Maine* began soliciting the contributions of young readers, much as they continued to urge farmers to write. In “A Call,” Annie urges readers to “respond to our Editor’s kind invitation and write for the Children’s Column”

because “has not Maine as good writers among the young folks as among the older ones?” (4). Although, within the column, writers are not offered further composition advice or grammar instruction in the way that older readers are in other parts of the journal, for the next several years, young readers’ contributions account for a majority of the material published in “Young Folks.” Young writers often talk about school or experiences at home, frequently commenting on what they like about the column, and their desire to see their name in print. Cushman’s sense that *Maine Farmer*’s inclusion of a space for young people to publish their writing not only allowed them to see their names printed, but was in fact educationally beneficial is echoed in other comments made about the column, reiterating the idea that learning to write for publication is an important lesson for the “young folks.” In the quotation excerpted at the beginning of this chapter, for instance, Cushman again explains the importance of the column, stating that he:

highly value[s] the ‘Young Folks’ column, not because its contents are superior to the rest, but because the articles are written by young people – those who are just commencing a course of action and pursuits in life. The pen is the instrument of power, and those who learn to use it will have means in their hands that will educate and bless their fellowmen. The learning how to use the pen is one of the most important branches of education (“A Few Thoughts” 2).

The column is not only helpful in aiding children in learning to compose, it also, according to this contributor, is important in encouraging them to participate in the agricultural press in much the same way that the journal encourages their parents to contribute, and in this way is an important part of schooling them in the kinds of literate activities they need to be prepared to engage in when they are older. Elmer W Ness, one of the “young folks,” states simply that: “I think it is a nice plan for the little folks to write for papers, as it teaches them to compose.” While Ness’ comment sounds

suspiciously like something a teacher or parent or editor prompted him to write – or wrote for him, given that he is, allegedly, eight years old – it does contribute to the overall belief in *Maine* that contributing to the journal could be a learning experience. Somewhat predictably, quite a number of the letters published in the column describe school experiences. More importantly, however, many of them also note that they are currently on a break from school, either because they are ill, lack a teacher, or school is closed for lack of students able to attend, suggesting that perhaps parents, too, are using letters to the column as a home writing assignment – a practice encouraged by the journal’s continuous urge for readers to write and their simultaneous critique of the composition education offered in primary schooling. This ideal was not restricted, of course, to young people; in “A Word to the Wise,” Carolyn urges women to write more to the journal as well, arguing that “if we young ladies would only try the experiment of writing for the Farmer, I am sure we should receive much benefit from it . . . . Sisters, young and old, take my advice and write, *write*. Perhaps the editor will print *some* of your efforts” (3 emphasis in original). In this column focused on women, as well as in the Young Folks’ Column, and in the farming periodicals on the whole, editors and contributors assert their belief that practice in an interactive context is the best method of writing education, a pedagogy I will examine, that is visible both in their critiques of the composition training offered in local schools and in their encouragements for readers (young or old) to contribute to the agricultural press.

In “Our Public Schools,” the writer<sup>32</sup> complains that a recent school committee found that while students have been taught to “parse and construe sentences, and point out the various parts of speech,” but that “when called upon to write an ordinary letter

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<sup>32</sup> It is unclear whether this article was written by an editor or contributor.

they were utterly unable to apply the rules and principles they had so painfully learned”

(2). The article writer doubts that this system of education, that teaches the principles of writing apart from the writing contexts students will actually face – letters and articles for the *Grange* and journals – is useful, arguing instead that students learn by doing, being taught “to read and write and cipher just as they learned to swim or to skate” (2). Such critiques of the type of pedagogy present in public schools, and colleges especially, appear often in these farming publications, where writers focus on the problem of educating outside the intellectual contexts of their daily lives. Advice to writers in their own reading audience corresponds to this overall belief that practical experience in everyday contexts is the best method of education in any subject. One such article, “On Writing,” asserts that “another fault in young beginners is viewing composition as a task imposed on them by their teacher, and making it their chief object to cover a certain quantity of paper with writing, but you must have a higher aim than this or you will never be a good writer” (4). This idea is echoed in the “Woman’s Department” as well, where readers advise that teachers consider incorporating publication into their writing lessons: “if they can have a little paper or magazine, as the Nursery or the Young Folks’ Column in the *Farmer*, to use with their readers, it often adds much to their interest in learning”

(1). Good writing, these articles and others assert, has an educational and social purpose for a real community of readers, like those of the *Maine* and *Ohio*. Taking up the practice of writing for agricultural journals, these articles suggest, allows writers to compose on familiar subjects with the real purpose of sharing their knowledge with others, a process that will be an effective education in improving their own skills as well. “Writing” in *Ohio* articulates this even more pointedly, asserting that teachers have

approached the teaching of writing incorrectly: "The fault lies in the failure to make their knowledge practical. Teaching others to parse and analyze is not teaching to write the English language correctly. Experience proves this" (302). Taylor, the author of "Writing," likens teaching composition by means of rules of grammar to teaching a man to tear down a building, and then expecting him to understand how to build it, claiming that "their drill in the school room, while ostensibly professing to teach them to write correctly, has failed in this essential particular" (302). One of the main points of contention is that, whatever students have learned to write, they have not learned the most important form: knowledge-based articles for publication in agricultural press. Taylor criticizes schools for creating grammarians, rather than writers, claiming "in like manner there are any number of our best grammarians, if thorough knowledge of the technicalities of that branch as now generally taught is a test, who would feel bewildered if required to write a notice ten lines in length for publication" (302). Taylor advocates instead "practically useful training" in any branch of study, writing included.

For both *Maine* and *Ohio*, then, the best method of learning to write for publication was simply to get into the practice of doing so. In "The Young Farmer's Corner," a reader of *Ohio* requests that the journal should set aside a column for younger farmers, new to both the profession and to writing for publication, could have their work published: "where the younger generation of farmers could have a corner all to themselves, and have it in charge of a young farmer. In this way they would feel that they were not entirely unnoticed" (93). Importantly, for G. C. S., "there is another advantage in a department of this kind. The young farm boys would be encouraged to write their experiences on the farm, and in this way would learn to write material for the

paper in later years” (93). The editor responds to this suggestion by agreeing with G.C.S. that young farmers especially need to practice writing for the papers, but maintains that new writers may do so just as well by contributing to the main journal, and do not need a separate column: “the gentleman is also correct in his statement that the young man must be trained to write for the papers. We have brought out more new writers, perhaps, than any other farm paper now published. We believe, however, that the young writer feels a greater pride in having his articles appear alongside the writings of those of the old ‘war-horses’” (93). Elsewhere in *Ohio*, the editors urge readers to “write often,” a sentiment echoed by *Maine* as well. In “On Writing” reluctant *Maine* writers are assured that any attempts they make at composing will help them improve, for “indeed, one good successful effort will greatly diminish every succeeding effort, and make writing easy”

(4). Readers are then taken through a description of what the composition process should entail, with an emphasis on revision: writers are instructed to at first merely convey their thoughts and:

then carefully and repeatedly read it over and correct it: study ever sentence, weighing every expression, and making every possible improvement. Then lay it aside a while, and afterwards copy it with such improvements as occur at the time; then lay it aside and after some days revise it again and see what further improvements and corrections you can make, and copy it a second time (4).

Following this strategy, “On Writing” asserts, will help writers become more skilled in future compositions: “if you repeat this process half a dozen times it will be all the better, nor will the time you spend upon it be lost. One such composition will conquer the difficulties in the way of writing, and every time you repeat such an effort you will find your mind improving and thoughts multiplying” (4). Even articles more intently focused on offering mechanical advice return to the idea that repeated practice will lead to



improvement; in “Hints to Writers” (1886), the editor concludes by encouraging writers “if what you write at one time is not published, write again, and again” (94).

*“The simplest language”: Style and Language in The Farmer*

Apart from suggesting that their audiences will get better at writing through practice, *Maine Farmer* and *Ohio Farmer* restrict most of their practical advice on other elements of writing to brevity and language. Underscoring the fact that they value compositions based in knowledge and facts, articles like “Study Brevity – Give Us Facts” in *Maine* and “The Editor’s Shears” and “The Editor’s Pencil” in *Ohio* enjoin prospective writers to tailor their compositions to their audience by making their statements more concise. The writer, presumably the editor, of “Study Brevity” states simply that: “it will be better for you, and much easier for us, if you will make it a point to condense your statements as much as possible, giving only the main facts and conclusions. Avoid long introductions; say what you have got to say, and stop. This ‘stopping’ part is a grand thing, if everybody only knew just when to put it in operation” (1). The author of “Study Brevity” does not give much in the way of strategies for “stopping” or “condensing,” but the writer of “Editor’s Shears” and “Editor’s Pencil” makes a similar point, offering more specific advice on accomplishing the task. Here, the editor inserts an example of an article recently submitted to the journal. He makes clear that this article, or part of it, will in fact be published, but wants readers to observe that “the writer makes the mistake that most young writers make – and some old ones, too – of wasting a lot of effort, paper and ink, in trying to introduce the subject. When they get through with this and get down to business – practical business – telling what they themselves know, about raising corn, or whatever it is, they are all right” (498). Suggesting to potential journal writers that their

true skill lies in “telling what they themselves know” rather than crafting a “glittering introduction,” he also makes clear to readers why this particular audience values brevity – and not, apparently, introductions: “what we want to impress upon young writers is the fact that no glittering introduction is wanted in a practical article. Pitch right into the subject. Tell what you yourself know of importance bearing on the subject in the briefest possible manner and *stop* when you have told it.” Writing, for both these journals, is to be practical, rather than glittering – an ideal that matches the editor’s plea that “it’s not rhetoric the people want but facts” (“Farm Experience”). “The Editor’s Pencil,” citing “Editor’s Shear” and “King’s English” series as attempts to help readers refine their language and adopt brevity, offers further explanation for their desire for conciseness, framing the request in terms of publication labor and audience expectations:

what our readers and ourselves want on practical topics, is specific facts from the writer’s experience, and brief conclusions from them, all given in clear, terse English. This we have tried to enforce in recent editorials, ‘The King’s English,’ and ‘The Editor’s Shears.’ The editor’s pencil *must*, in the interests of our readers and our advertisers, dash through all superfluous and general matter in contributors’ articles, and come at once to the essential and specific (24).

“The Editor’s Pencil” goes on to specifically outline why brevity is “in the interests of our readers and our advertisers,” but the other articles outline a few of the outcomes of brevity, as well, among them the fact that it will allow more writers to publish their work, leading to greater variety in the journal. “Hints to Writers” in *Maine Farmer* further emphasizes the value of brevity for agricultural audiences, explaining that “long articles, however well written, are often passed over, when brief ones are read, and better remembered” (1). The writer of “Editor’s Pencil,” at the same time, asks writers to put themselves in the place of the publisher and “let the writer change the standpoint and

think this: ‘every inch of space takes money’” (24). “Study Brevity” asks writers to “write often, but write short” (1); the value of the state-local journal is that it touches on (or attempts to touch on) all subjects related to farm economy, and boasts that it presents multiple viewpoints, something these articles suggest is partly accomplished by having many (brief) writers. “Writing short” has implications for journal readers, too. It is not just, as “Study Brevity,” “Editor’s Shears,” “Farm Experience,” and numerous other writing-related articles point out, that journal readers desire specific knowledge and factual articles; knowledge of the life realities of the audience should help readers understand the call for brevity, as well. The writer of “Editor’s Pencil” requests that readers keep this in mind as they compose:

What I am writing now will be seen by nearly a quarter of a million pairs of eyes. If because I do not write cleanly, condense properly, begin at the beginning or stop at the end of what I really have of value to convey – if I thus waste one minute of the time of each reader, then I have caused a total loss of about 150 days (24).

The readers of *Maine* and *Ohio* are busy – as the articles on reading and writing repeatedly acknowledge; for “The Editor’s Pencil” the costs of literary digression are steep: it wastes time and money on the part of readers, as well as ink and paper on the part of the writer.

The author of “Editor’s Pencil” shows future writers how they may avoid this waste by giving a lesson in ways to condense, a lesson echoed in *Maine Farmer’s* “Hints to Young Writers.” Presenting an introduction sent in by a correspondent, the editor of “Editor’s Pencil” notes the places where the writer strays into unnecessary discussion, and then shows different ways to fix the text: “two courses lay before the editor – to cut out this Introduction entirely, as superfluous, or to condense its thought somewhat as

follows . . . ” (24). For “Hints to Young Writers,” at the same time, attempting to make language more concise is a matter of revision that, like any other aspect of writing, will gradually become easier with practice. Here, readers are advised that “if you could do so, that is, if you could spend the time (and if you mean to write no time could be so well spent) it would be a grand thing for you to re-write your articles and reduce them in length one-half. In a little time this practice would give you a habit of directness in thinking and writing that would be of great service to you.” Just as so many articles address the reluctance or insecurity they imagine some of their readers will feel about writing for publication, so too the articles focused on brevity make clear that “there is no touch of sarcasm or even blame in what we say” (“Pencil,” 24). Many writers could benefit, so “Pencil” claims, from trying to be more concise; “Shears,” at the same time, offers an anecdote about how “President Canfield of our State university tells a good joke of himself,” giving a speech that would have benefitted from the “editor’s shears.”

The belief that imperfect writing was not something to be embarrassed of also appears in *Maine's* and *Ohio's* treatments of language and grammar. The editor of *Ohio* in his plea for audience members to contribute in “Farm Experience” explains that it is important for farmers to participate in sharing agricultural knowledge, regardless of their comfort level with writing, claiming that “one common excuse is they cannot express themselves properly, but this is a poor one. The most effective writers and speakers use the simplest language” (103). Other portions of that journal, and *Maine*, however, expand this claim about effective writers; articles like “Hints to Correspondents” and “The Neglected Tool” suggest that their contributors should view the journal as another forum like the Grange or a textual version of talk “over the fence,” a practice cast as

being critical to farm management, and in this way, they should seek to write in their own language. “Neglected Tool” argues this clearly in the request that for readers to “write in your own way – use the plain words you would in talking, for they are the best” (369). Likewise, “The Editor’s Strainer,” suggests that reluctant writers imagine they are discussing topics with a friend, advising that they “tell it as you would to a friend whom you wished to inform, interest, or instruct. But tell it concisely for space is precious, and with great care, for you are telling it to three hundred thousands friends instead of one” (155). These articles reference the fact that skilled farmers’ words are valued in open discussion, and that they will have the same value in print, whether or not they have followed all rules of grammar. “Hints to Writers” begins by telling writers to “write plain[;] this is the first requisite and the main one,” while “On Writing” urges readers that “writing is but thinking on paper” (78;4). The reason offered, throughout these journals, is that the knowledge, debate, or advice contained within the article outweigh its stylistic value; writers need to be clear and understandable – “be careful in stating facts or in reporting the results of any experiment to make your meaning clearly understood. We are quite frequently compelled to throw aside otherwise interesting and no doubt important statements, simply because they are unintelligible to us” (“Study Brevity”) – but they do not need to “flourish.” “The Editor’s Strainer,” continuing to suggest that the textual discussion contained in the journal is another form of “over the fence” or grange talk, explains that their “own language” is best: “don’t try to show off. Be yourself and no one else. If you have nothing worth telling, do not try to tell it. If you have, tell it in your own language, simply, clearly, quietly, forcibly if the subject calls for force” (155). The reason offered, and articulated most plainly in “Neglected Tool,” is

that “good spelling, grammatical sentences and high-sounding words never make a good article alone,” for “we would rather have one article crammed full of good sense and useful knowledge, with every word misspelled, and every sentence a violation of grammar rules, than to have all the nicely rounded sentences ever written, if they were devoid of these requisites” (369). “Institute Workers,” another reply to the discussion of grammar and “King’s English,” is even more strongly critical of favoring style over content; W.N. Cowden criticizes a former contributor, XYZ, for publishing the grammar violations of un-named state speakers. Cowden asserts that “she doubtless refers to the provincialisms common to all parts of the state,” and argues that such forms of ridicule are “over fastidious” and that “it is facts and instructions that the people want and should have, and the better the dress in which the facts and instruction are clothed, the more acceptable; but often these are none the less beautiful or useful because in home-spun” (249).

This is not to suggest, *overall*, that spelling and grammar are not listed as concerns – spelling, in fact, is frequently held up as the one area writers should be able to aim for correctness – but that nearly all discussions of grammar and language concerns are framed as ways readers can voluntarily “improve” themselves, and not as impediments to writing for the public. Cowden, in fact, concludes her criticism of XYZ’s emphasis on grammar by noting that “this is no apology for bad grammar, or illogical arrangement or bad pronunciation, but only a protest against a wholesale charge against a class that do a great amount of hard work and endure a large amount of exposure and do a great deal” (249). Similarly, the second article of the “King’s English” pair mentions incorrect spelling and minor grammar errors, saying “these are defects, of course, but you

all know that, and will naturally do the best you can,” and adding that only more major writing and content issues will prevent publication: “any editor will overlook them [spelling] gladly if the article is full of meat and is comparatively free from the more serious defects mentioned” (30). “Editor’s Strainer,” the last in the “Editor” series of articles on grammar outlines in greatest length the journal’s perspective on offering advice on style and mechanics. Here, the editor responds to the “good press” generated by the previous articles and explains that:

A paper like *The Ohio Farmer* has a large number of correspondents who can and do furnish the kind of matter needed – practical information – but who have no special desire to improve their style, but simply to convey their thought clearly and briefly. Their articles are always welcome, and our suggestions and mild criticisms are not intended for them at all, any further than they desire to benefit by them. They are intended chiefly for those who wish to improve their literary style (154).

Thus, much as potential writers are reassured of the value of the message they could convey to the journal, they are also not to worry over grammatical rules when they write.

However, both *Maine* and *Ohio* continue to address issues of grammar as a way to further assuage the fears of reluctant writers, giving advice on correctness mixed with assurances both that the value of their composition is not dependant on grammar and that they can easily improve the grammatical correctness of any article they have written by following the magazine’s advice. “Hints to Correspondents,” for instance, claims that “as to the rules of writing, the greatest amount of trouble we find is in the writer’s attempting to observe too many of them”; the fact that the writer “desperately” wants to make certain words emphatic or is “so fearful” about borrowing words without credit, according to this editor-instructor, leads them into making more errors than they would have made if they had had confidence in the clarity of their own words (408). What follows the editor’s

observation, then, is a lesson in grammar rules and mistakes to avoid, instructing readers in the use of citation, italics, commas, and capital letters: “as a rule, use capital letters to begin words only at the starting of a sentence, names of individuals, towns, rivers, places, months of the year, days of the week, etc.” (408). “Hints To Writers” and the “King’s English” series give similar advice, warning writers to be wary of overusing dashes and semi-colons and to not use alliteration which “is the vice of newspaper headliners and the disgust of all good taste” (“King’s English,” 10). At times, as in “Hints to Correspondents,” audience perception is named as a reason for grammar considerations, as writers are warned: “where a question comes up as to whether capitals or punctuation should be used, give preference in favor of the doubt and leave them out. Over use shows greater ignorance than the lack of them” (408). “King’s English,” likewise, suggests that writers unclear of the rules of punctuation should limit themselves to the use of periods and keep sentences short, advising to “punctuate simply to make your thoughts more clear” (10). Moreover, some contributors to *Maine* and *Ohio* were more emphatic about the value of readers improving grammar correctness; in an editorial in the “Woman’s Department” in *Maine Farmer*, Persis praises a previous article by “Mrs. A.L.M.” on grammar and adds to the topic, noting the methods of “good teachers” who teach the parts of speech, ultimately asserting that “to hear a person talk who presents good ideas clothed in clear and proper language is a real pleasure” (1). Repeatedly, writers are reminded that “a little attention to this matter will make a decided improvement with those willing to learn” and that “we do not write this in a spirit of criticism, but simply to benefit our readers who may desire to improve themselves in this direction” (“Hints to Correspondents” 408; “Hints to Writers” 78). It is clear, however,



that the editor places the expertise of his hopeful writers in the realm of content, and wishes them to either learn to improve their linguistic style, or avoid such rules altogether, and not simply because it “shows greater ignorance.” He asks that readers “do not strew in commas broadcast; if they and the other punctuation points cannot be used according to given rules, please leave them out entirely, for it is easier for an editor to place one here and there than to strike out a dozen or two in every sentence” (408). Just as writers should not waste “150 days” of readers’ time with lengthy digressions, so too they should not waste the effort of the editor with convoluted punctuation usage; the writer’s time is better spent on addressing the goals for his or her composition.

*“We call it an agricultural implement”: Teachers and Writers*

In arguing that farmers have a responsibility to their local farming community and their profession to contribute written accounts of their experiences and knowledge of agriculture, magazines like *Ohio* and *Maine* provided writers not only with content to write about, but an outcome to write toward. In *Maine*, Monroe stated simply that “farms are schools” and “farmers are teachers” (1); he was speaking of the possibilities for agricultural education at home in the form of reading and practical experience. However, in their assertion that farmers needed to compose articles “crammed full of good sense” that would “be a benefit to all,” the editors of these two magazines extended Monroe’s argument: farmers teach through their writing. To become a writer for *Ohio* or *Maine* was to become a teacher, of many rather than a few. Connected to the periodicals’ generous treatment of their readers’ insecurities about the rules of writing was a deep sense of respect and an acknowledgement of authority: readers were simultaneously students of writing and professionals in their field (bad accidental pun). Magazine editors

were not alone in this perspective, moreover; even as the editor of *Ohio* discussed writing as an “attempt to instruct” and reminded readers of “these old, veteran farmers who have never written a word for agriculture, have accumulated from many years’ experience and observation, a fund of practical knowledge and information that would be eminently useful, could they be persuaded to impart it to the world” (“Neglected,” 369), contributors like Quercus Alba and Red Oak made parallel assertions about the authority farmers held on agricultural matters and the necessity of their sharing that education with others. Alba claims that “there are farmers who with their pens, can, in an hour, impart to the young farmer as much on a certain subject as they can learn in a lifetime of study and experience” (1), and Oak urges experienced farmers to “speak for the sake of justice and a higher degree of right education in farming” (1). For *Ohio*, *Maine*, and farming periodicals in general calling for the written contributions of readers, farmers possessed valuable knowledge that outweighed the literary abilities of the editors and publishers of the agricultural press. Editors could fix grammar, but could not supply the desired content of a farming paper, as Stevens made clear in *Farmer’s Home Journal*: “Most editors of agricultural papers are more theoretical than practical and are hardly competent to give the inquiring farmer information in detail” (561). Members of the reading audience, then, needed to become published writers because, as the editor of *Southern Planter* maintained, “there is no greater obligation or necessity among farmers than that they should teach and learn of each other” (413). The editors of *Ohio* and *Maine*, then, sought to offer readers advice in advanced literacy in order to help them be more effective communicators and teachers. What these journals offer us, in turn, is a collection of editors and readers making an argument for advanced literacy and pedagogy

that is not unlike some of the values compositionists bring into classrooms today: that rules of grammar are not as important as clarity and content, that the best method of learning to write is practice in meaningful contexts, and that learning writers bring with them valuable experience and knowledge to impart.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### IDENTIFYING READERS AND WRITERS

In 1844 *Maine Farmer*, complaining of the inadequate education offered in schools, explained that it was important for teachers to account for and incorporate the skills and experiences of their students, as they “must know how to adapt [their] instructions to the several capacities and circumstances of [their] scholars” (1). *Harper’s Bazar* echoed *Maine*, claiming that education needed to suit the experiences and interests of female students. And Edward Bok, desiring to expand a promising periodical into a trend-setting business, believed that he needed to connect personally with readers – to understand the ideals and material realities of American women. In spite of wide gulfs in terms of publication goals, content, and pedagogical strategy, *Harper’s Bazar*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and the farming journals all operated on the belief that just as writers need to learn to understand and consider their audiences, so too teachers and magazine editors must understand and incorporate the skills and contexts of their students into their teaching practices. Ultimately, it is perhaps unsurprising that these three types of magazines arrived at such different pedagogies for and definitions of literacy, as each needed to tailor its strategies for its reading audience. Thus, the *Bazar* sets itself up as a mentor, guiding new participants into the reading and writing practices of woman’s clubs. At the same time, the *Journal* establishes itself as an expert, teaching women strategies

for participating in a literate market, even as the farming journals position themselves as knowledgeable mediators, helping agricultural experts contribute their work to a professional community. In differing ways, however, all emphasize the importance of contribution, arguing that, for their readers, advanced literacy was defined by the ability to contribute to a community. Operating on different but equally specific definitions of literacy, the *Bazar*, the *Journal*, and farming periodicals ultimately articulate not just practices, but literacy communities and identities for their readers.

Expansive literacy histories like those of DeCastille and Luke, Graff, and Gordon and Gordon have provided us with both a broad perspective on literacy rates at the turn of the century, as well as more nuanced critiques of the numerous and diverse factors, such as employment and housing trends, school reforms, and publishing costs, that contributed to the reading and writing experiences of Americans. They also agree that during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans betrayed a preoccupation with the perceived threats posed by widespread illiteracy in poor and immigrant populations and, in turn, focused efforts on increasing national literacy rates, especially by educating children. Scholars such as Jessica Enoch, David Wallace Adams, and Jacqueline Jones Royster articulate how African American and American Indian populations, in particular, served as focal points for this literacy crisis, the subjects of a benevolent mission to foster morality and middle-class, white, citizenship through literacy. Given how regularly this national preoccupation with illiteracy appears in our histories, and indeed in archives of 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspapers and journals, it is perhaps surprising that between 1880 and 1910 very few articles discussing illiteracy appear in the magazines I investigated. Articles discussing the education of readers' children appear often enough, especially in *Ladies'*

*Home Journal* where the magazine addresses its mothers and in the farming journals where writers are concerned with specific, local school issues, but even these articles presuppose that children will learn to read and write well enough; it is the overall quality (and cost of) their education that is on debate. In fact, the only place where these periodicals consider the literacy worries so well historicized by scholars is in a few articles that work to reinforce the literacy practices endorsed by the magazine and, often, to disassemble literacy myths, arguing that that there is no connection between literacy and criminality.

I will examine these magazines' treatment of literacy and morality later, but it is first important to consider *why* a collection of popular periodicals, one in particular that had an unprecedented national circulation, that *are* concerned about the education and reading and writing practices of their audiences, do not devote appreciable space to discussing the lack of literacy in others. It is possible, of course, that Edward Bok, so devoted to the domestic issues facing his middle-class mothers and inclined to avoid controversy, simply did not deem illiteracy a topic relevant for his audience. Likewise, it is conceivable that a collection of eastern and middle-eastern state-specific journals devoted almost exclusively to rural issues would be more interested in how educational trends and laws would affect their district schools rather than national literacy rates. However, I argue that the reason the *Journal*, the *Bazar*, and farming journals do not give attention to discussions (or threats) of illiteracy among poor, urban populations is because these magazines operate almost exclusively on definitions of literacy specific to their own audiences. For the readers of the *Bazar* and the *Journal*, basic reading and writing abilities were not at question. Although each journal utilizes a slightly different

definition, none suggests that literacy for its readers can be evidenced by the basic ability to write a name or read a paper; rather, they seek to introduce their readers to specific literacy practices and demonstrate how these practices will enable them to participate in specific communities of readers – whether in women's clubs or in the periodical or agricultural press. Ultimately, I contend that in articulating and describing a set of lifestyle-specific literacy practices, these magazines create and support literacy identities for their reading audiences.

### *Literacy Practices and Identities*

It is obvious, in Mabie's first *Journal* column on reading critically, in every outline Cutting offers for *Harpers'* club-women, and in each article offering advice to the contributors to the agricultural press that these popular journals all wish to educate their readers into very specific literate habits; it is equally obvious that editors believe they know the audiences to whom they are speaking and understand the values and goals for reading and writing in their readers' lives. The illustrations of literacy editors provide, then, are best understood in the context of the social and ideological framework the magazines construct, in particular their depiction of their readers as representing a class of men and women who share common experiences, values, and resources.

In this chapter, then, I analyze these magazines' definitions of literacy in correlation with their construction of their audiences' collective identity, arguing that each magazine's treatment of literacy and audience illustrates of the construction of a literacy identity for readers. The magazines I examine are ultimately concerned with how effectively their prospective writers are able to contribute to a community of readers. Importantly, the communities identified by the magazines – whether they were women's

clubs, periodical publishers, or an agricultural profession – were consciously established and defined by editors within the context of their magazines. In working so hard to describe for readers the social domains in which they need to read and write, editors convey how particular literacy practices connect magazine readers to the values and goals of communities of which they (should) feel a part. What these three types of magazines offer us, then, are three different kinds of literacy or discourse communities – rural/agricultural; young, urban women; and adult married women and mothers – and three corresponding conceptions of the literacy skills and values editors insist accompany these domains. They assert, moreover, that in becoming a contributor, writers assume a certain identity – a construction the magazine itself works to define and promote. Editors, then, directly link the identity and goals ascribed to their audiences with the reading and writing practices they are advocating, offering for their readers a kind of literacy identity – an illustration of a set of lifestyle-specific reading and writing practices that allow participants to enter communities with whom they identify.

The farming journals, the *Bazar*, and the *Journal* construct a literacy identity for their readers by first establishing a collective audience identity and describing a collection of interests and goals associated with that audience, and then arguing for a specific set of reading and writing practices that will allow readers to fulfill those goals. In *Harper's Bazar*, although certain articles do focus on women as mothers, readers are illustrated as educated women engaging in an active social life with other women; the *Bazar* portrays its readers as being interested in further developing relationships with other women and in learning more about literature, history, and culture. The *Journal*, at the same time, although sometimes addressing “girls” – and always by name – speaks to



its readers as wives and mothers, addressing the audience's perceived desire to be better buyers (and caretakers) of a household and desire to find enjoyment in reading. Farming periodicals, finally, construct their readers' identity on their profession and location; even more explicitly and emphatically than the women's magazines, the farming journals demand that readers take an interest in scientific exploration of agriculture and seek to contribute to the professional development of other farmers and the improvement of community lives.<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly, editors' illustration of audience identity is wrapped in their assumptions about economic and social class, and their portrayal of the characteristics of various social groups. Despite differences in tone and goals, all of these magazines focus incredibly closely on their audiences as constituting a specific class of the national population, and correspondingly devote effort to illustrating how certain reading and writing practices fit in with their own constructions of the values and tastes of that class. It is not possible, of course, to know exactly who was reading each periodical, and it is likely, especially with such popular magazines as *Harper's* and the *Journal* which would have circulated well beyond the subscriber list, that readers came from diverse economic backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, each editor constructs a relatively homogenous, class-based

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<sup>33</sup> I do not mean to suggest that these magazines, all of which contained a wide range of departments, focused on myriad topics, and acknowledged large reading audiences, focused exclusively on the goals and interests I discuss above, or that, throughout each magazine as a whole, editors did not offer a more complex and varied reading of their audience's identity. Only that, in the articles and columns I have addressed – in the places where readers are offered explicit advice in reading and writing practices – editors concentrate on women as members of intimate clubs with a social interest, on women as readers and writers of literature for pleasure, and on men as professionals developing an agricultural field.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, in "Just Among Ourselves," readers talk about their habit of passing magazines to friends and donating old issues. Bok, moreover, in "The Magazine with a Million," outlines the circulation of the magazine, census records of the literate population, and surveys the *Journal* conducted about magazine sharing; he reported that "each copy of the *Journal* is, on average, read by seven persons during its life" (16). In addition, taking readers through his calculating process, Bok asserts that as "a safely conservative estimate," "with twenty-five millions of people possible of becoming interested in the magazine, we reach

audience identity – all of them claiming to be writing for “middle-class” readers – and connects certain literacy practices with that identity. The understanding of class, then, that I am working from here is not tied directly to readers’ presumed income, but is rather based on Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of classes as “sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances” (*Language and Symbolic Power* 231). Throughout discussions of education, women’s clubs, publishing, and writing for the press, editors articulate a set of conditions, dispositions, and goals for their audience, arguing that readers require certain literacy practices to participate in a like-minded community.

Numerous studies have reflected on the connection between literacy and identity, nearly all of them focused on contemporary writers, particularly in classrooms or online (Ivanic, Williams, Thomas, boyd, Rose). In “Literacy and Identity: Examining Metaphors in History and Contemporary Research,” Elizabeth Birr Moje and Allan Luke outline and categorize the many approaches to literacy and identity used in recent scholarship, arguing that scholars need to be as critical of their definition of identity as they are of their conception of literacy. They are justifiably wary of the implications of what they term “identity-as-difference” approaches – approaches that focus on economic, racial, or ethnic groups theorizing “how people are distinguished from one another by virtue of their group membership and on how ways of knowing, doing, or believing held or practiced by a group shape the individual as a member of that group” (10). Their

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the figure that one out of every five persons met with in every part of the United States is either a subscriber or a reader of *The Ladies Home Journal*” (16).

concern is that “such identity perspectives are often considered essentialist, reducing people to phenotype, country of origin, sexual orientation, and other qualities of difference” (13). While “identity-as-difference” certainly poses challenges for theorizing and studying the literate activities of individual writers, this conception of identity does resonate with the literacy identity constructions provided by magazines, which, although arguably attempting to offer readers the authority to contribute to women’s clubs and periodical publications, nonetheless did present their audiences with a pre-defined identity construction. In her exploration of student writers negotiating discursal identities in *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*, Ivanic asserts that “writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody” (32). What I will examine in my analysis of the literacy identities formulated in the *Bazar*, the *Journal*, and farm magazines is how these turn-of-the-century magazines went about creating and deploying “socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood.”<sup>35</sup>

*"Reading People": Becoming a Woman of the Magazine Community*

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<sup>35</sup> In “Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late Nineteenth-Century Story Papers,” Sara Lindey explores reader contributions to weekly newspapers, arguing that boys “used the story paper spaces to understand their own emerging subjectivity and write themselves into adulthood. These young readers saw themselves as capable of entering the public marketplace by writing themselves into the story paper itself, yet they struggled with their own preparedness, asking story paper editors to evaluate and help them improve their professional literacy” (73). Working from the story contributions themselves and from editors’ answers to readers’ unprinted questions, Lindey asserts that late-century story papers served the function of introducing young men to professional literary writing and allowing them a space to adopt the identity of a profession writer. While inferring anything about readers’ intentions in contributing to a periodical or their perceptions of their own subjectivity seems highly problematic, the popularity of magazines such as the *Journal* and the number of men and women readers who did ultimately write to and for them does suggest the illustrations of audience identity and discursal possibilities for self-hood offered in these periodicals resonated with their intended audiences.

Although Bok claims in his autobiography that when he assumed the role of editor at the *Journal* he knew nothing about women's thoughts and preferences, he quickly establishes in his column "At Home with the Editor" that he has learned a great deal about the talents, values, and concerns of his readership through their letters to him.<sup>36</sup> In fact, Bok did know something about the subscribers to his magazine: Bok asked readers to complete a survey in the first "At Home" issue and the Curtis publishing company kept records of the income rates of subscribers and ultimately formed the first market research department of any publishing house. Bok used information about his readers in constructing magazine advertisements, of course, but also allowed it to shape magazine content. In fact, both the *Journal* and the *Bazar*, featuring a great deal of pictures and image content – the *Journal* was the first magazine to use color printing – and employing more women on their editorial boards than most magazines, projected an illustration of the American woman and sold it to readers as a representation of themselves. Editors further connected assumptions about audience identity to discussions of education and reading and writing habits, ultimately offering readers an illustration of themselves as readers and writers. Although she is examining women's magazines in the late 1970s, Martha A. Starr considers how periodical content can both reflect and work to construct gendered identities in "Consumption, Identity, and the Sociocultural Constitution of 'Preferences': Reading Women's Magazines." Starr contends that two magazines in particular, *Working Woman* and *Working Mother*, worked to construct an identity for the "working woman," "that is, in *describing* how women could stylize and conceptualize themselves to find meaning, fulfillment, and social worth through work,

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<sup>36</sup> At times Bok is appalled at the confidences given to him; in one issue he criticizes mothers of teenage girls, arguing that there is "something wrong" in their homes if their daughters are writing for marriage and personal advice from a complete stranger.

they were also participating in the process of *defining* conventions of what the working woman would be like” (297). For the *Journal* and the *Bazar*, in addition to being obviously gendered for their female audiences, the identity constructions they promote are also overtly connected to the magazines’ treatment of consumption and class. Although both magazines outline a literacy identity that emphasizes social relationships, the *Bazar* presents readers as clubwomen contributing to an intimate community of women, while the *Journal* offers two separate subject positions: readers as consumers and writers as saleswomen.

It is obvious that the literacy-based activities editors are recommending for readers are contingent upon a series of overt assumptions about the experiences and resources of their audiences. While both the *Bazar* and the *Journal* acknowledge that their readers may require insight into the practices of woman’s clubs and literary publishing, they also clearly assume a high level of literacy among their readers. For both women’s journals, it is a given that readers have completed and moved beyond a basic education; if readers have not been able to attend college themselves, it is assumed that they are discussing the possibility for their daughters. The *Journal*, of course, concentrates more on its readers as being responsible for a household and children, while the *Bazar* considers a more decidedly urban population and focuses less on its readers’ presumed domestic responsibilities – in part because numerous places make mention of their audiences’ natural inclination to hire domestic help. However, both journals take for granted that their readers are interested in pursuing some form of self-education and have the money, time, and local resources – such as libraries and bookstores – to do so. The *Bazar* clearly imagines that its readers have the leisure time both to take part in a

woman's club, and to do the kind of reading and reflection the "Home Study" column imagines is necessary for participation in club work. Likewise, while Bok acknowledges the idea of a large and economically diverse readership, he simultaneously asserts that (partially through the *Journal* itself) his readers have the resources to educate themselves and that they are alike in their desires for improving the home and their own minds. In his regular column – "At Home with the Editor" – in which he discusses correspondence and ongoing *Journal* themes and issues, Bok provides his own loose definition of a "middle-class" audience, making clear that while he believes this class may include a wide range of incomes (excluding only absolute poverty), it is united in the deeper ideals of family, home, and charity. He admits that he "cannot hope to reach" the "wretched poor of the world," but simultaneously asserts that "the peculiar character of the *Journal* brings it within the homes of all classes, and it is not strange that where so many topics are discussed, a responsive chord is often touched, now with the fashionable city woman of society, then with the lonely woman on the frontier or in remote village" (April 1891, 10). Given that the *Journal* always claims work for "the American woman," the magazine thus tacitly situates all loyal *Journal* readers as both middle-class and representatives of an official American womanhood, and excludes the "wretched poor" from this identity.

The *Bazar*, likewise, ignores women not included in its illustration of an intelligent, socially-active American womanhood. Articles like Katherine Rioch's "College-Bred Woman in Her Home" in the *Bazar* acknowledge the challenges facing educated women beginning household management, arguing that "the most serious difficulty in this new work is likely to arise from the lack of competent servants who can

relieve the young housekeeper of care, or even of drudgery” (14). Rioch, in agreement with the overall tenor of both the *Journal* and the *Bazar*, asserts that readers unsatisfied with a life of domestic work hire outside help and begin to approach household management as an intellectual endeavor: reading and writing to magazines such as the *Journal* and the *Bazar*, and taking responsibility for the reading practices of their family. More frequently, the *Bazar* suggests that readers either hire servants or study ways of running households more efficiently so that they continue to possess the time available for activities such as study clubs. For the *Bazar*, then, reading and writing practices are not tied to consumption, but rather to their readers’ social lives and their relationships with other women, as the journal urges women to assume the role of clubwomen in their literate lives. I argued in Chapter Two that the *Bazar* as a whole and E. B. Cutting in particular, in “The Home Study Club,” introduced the magazine audience to the practices of women’s clubs, guiding them into the reading and writing techniques used by clubwomen and offering explicit outlines of study for individual readers and clubs. Alongside Cutting’s study advice and syllabi in the “Study Club,” however, Margaret Hamilton Welch, in the “Club Women and Club Work” column, not only discusses national club news, she also defines what women’s clubs do and who clubwomen are. In this way, the *Bazar* offers a reflection of the American clubwoman, and, as Starr finds in magazines such as *Working Woman* in the 1970’s, takes part in constructing her literacy identity, mentoring readers in assuming this particular role in their own reading and writing both by teaching them the literacy practices discussed in Chapter Two and by promoting an image of the ideal clubwoman.

The basic formula for the “Club Women” column includes Welch’s general discussion of relevant club issues, national conventions, and a profile either of an individual club or woman. This profile, which almost always includes images of the club members and often meeting place, advertises the construction and activities of clubs; the accompanying images may depict members reading together as in an 1897 issue of the column where two members of the New Century Club of Philadelphia are depicted in a home library or the February 1899 issue which includes a photograph of the directors of the Brooklyn’s Woman’s Club sitting together with books open. More pointedly, the profiles of leading clubwomen, such as that of Matilda Williams Howard in the October 1897 issue, outline her influence among other women and the importance of the work done for and by the club. Of Howard, in particular, Welch points out that:

her service as corresponding secretary through her exceptionally long term of office is recognized as of great value to the society. Possessed of marked literary ability which found expression in much published work, both prose and poetry . . . her reports were as full of practical interest as they were models of purity of diction. Her penmanship was remarkable in its clearness and legibility, her minutes of her last meeting as secretary showing no trace of a tremulous hand (862).

Welch further describes how members of Howard’s club honored her by creating an album, each member contributing a page in “her own handwriting” (862). Profiles of individual clubwomen often make note of literary and rhetorical work, highlighting secretarial and speaking abilities, but also always linking these skills to Welch’s overall description of that woman’s appearance, manner, and position in her community. The December 1898 description of Miss Irwin Martin – whose photograph appears in the column – makes clear that she “is a Colonial Dame, and was for some time recording secretary of the New York City Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



With a distinct charm of manner and high intelligence she unites a special ability as presiding officer, having a distinguished and elegant bearing, and speaking with great ease and aptness" (1133). Moreover, Welch frames all the discussions in "Club Women and Club Work" as the story of the actions and experiences of individual women comprising small communities. Thus, when discussing the activities of clubs, Welch pointedly attributes decisions and actions to individual women, often citing a list of the officers of every club mentioned in each issue. So, for instance, in the February 1899 issue highlighting the Brooklyn Woman's Club, Welch does not simply state that the group debated the use of the word "club" in their title, but further indicates that "objections were raised to its use because of the attitude of society, but Mrs. Burleigh advocated retaining the word" (98). Welch's outlines of other club decisions, actions, and descriptions follow suit: the names of individual women appear throughout the discussion to such an extent that Welch almost seems to go out of her way to include the names of clubwomen and sometimes even their words.<sup>37</sup> In this way, the work and literacy practices of women's clubs, so thoroughly described in both "Club Women" and in "Home Study Club" are given to the names and faces of women that fit the description of the audience to which the *Bazar* was writing, and was urging readers to become.

Significantly, too, even in their reading and writing outside of clubs, women are encourage to continue to act as polite, sociable clubwomen. Thus, discussions of general

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<sup>37</sup> One paragraph of the Brooklyn Woman's Club profile reads thus: "The presidents have always been strong women, the pictured quartette being typical of the company who have in turn held the gavel over this fine assembly. Mrs. Ellen T. Brockway is a charter member of the club, and has always been prominent in its committee-work, besides her distinguished service as its leader. Mrs. Amelia K. Wing is a longtime member, winning her way to its head by rightful qualities. Mrs. Marianna W. Chapman, the immediate predecessor of Mrs. Backus, is a woman of dignified, gracious presence that is supplemented with a clear-headed, gentle calm, inherited from her Quaker ancestors. Mrs. Helen H. Backus, the present president, is also an ex-president, having preceded Mrs. Chapman to the limit of her continuous eligibility to the office. Mrs. Backus is a woman of high intelligence and scholarly education, and gifted besides with a rare genius for presiding that will make her substitute extremely difficult to find" (98).

reading in the *Bazar* are often framed as a social interaction between author and reader, with the magazine urging readers to assume the same well-mannered and socially-oriented role in their reading as they would in a club. In fact, Sangster, the magazine's chief editor, compares serious reading with social interactions, advising that "in the first place, girls, do not overlook the fact that a certain formality should be observed in making the acquaintance of a new book" ("Uses and Abuses," 32). The method of reading used by *Bazar* subscribers should also connect with their sense of polite conventions: "if the author has written a preface, politeness requires you to read it; otherwise you will be in the position of a boorish person who forces her way into a drawing-room after she had been courteously requested to linger a moment in the vestibule" (32). Sangster further recommends that readers commit authors and publishers to memory, as they would new acquaintances at a party, for "if you demand of an unlettered person some information about the novel he read last week, preferring the very natural inquiries, who wrote it, or by whom is it published, he will probably reply, 'I'm sure I don't know. I did not notice.' Reading people never show this inadvertence" (32). For the *Bazar*, the difference between "reading people" and "unlettered" people is not the ability to read a book, but rather in following specific conventions in approaching that book and in the ability to discuss that book with others; if *Bazar* readers are to be characterized by their desire to connect intimately with other women, then the reading practices they adopt need to contribute to this desire. Likewise in "Busy Women's Reading," Mary R. Baldwin invites readers to imagine themselves in the profile offered of the "busy woman" considering reading selections: "she often stands before her opportunities wondering how she could grasp and hold them, while longing to use them

toward satisfying the cravings of her mind and heart” (164). Baldwin ultimately recommends that readers read established literary classics and respected criticism, framing this practice not in terms of texts, but an interaction with a “great mind,” assuring readers that spending “half-hour each day with a leader of thought and a master of expression will save one from the mistake of following one’s own misdirected inclinations” (164). Always, the *Bazar* suggests that readers will want to share their reading experiences with other women and stresses editors’ recognition of the fact that they are already speaking to “reading people” as though women who enjoy reading and discussing that reading belong to a common class, as the editor indicates in “Novel-Readers,” claiming that “if one could separate novel-readers from the rest of humanity, as a class, one would say there was no other corresponding number of people that received so much enjoyment from existence as they” (466). The editor goes on to assert that “of course, as it is well known, there are exceptions to every rule, and so there are individuals of the race to whom the novel is a bore, and that not because they are illiterate,” assuring that readers “who do love novels” share a common bond in their ability to connect to one another through shared enjoyment of particular stories and characters. Here, too, reading practices are linked to the formation of social relationships, especially among women, and to an assumed audience identity of intelligent clubwomen.

For the *Journal*, conversely, the reading practices discussed by the magazine focus less on social relationships, and instead speak to the audience’s perceived identity as middle-income wives and mothers in charge of maintaining a household. Bok worked to demonstrate that women were the natural consumers of the household as well, and, as I discuss in Chapter Three, also helped readers to understand how they could be consumers

and producers of texts in the market. It is important to note, of course, that while the magazine contained articles that instructed readers on the practices and rhetorical values of editors and publishers, illuminating interested *Journal* readers on their role as novice writers, the vast majority of *Journal* articles situated women as responsible, critical consumers – of commercial products and of reading material. Francesca Berry, in “Designing the Reader’s Interior: Subjectivity and the Woman’s Magazine in Early Twentieth-Century France,” examines shifts in the construction of feminine identity that played out in women’s magazines and in discussions of the domestic interior. Berry asserts that magazines such as *Feminina* made use of “innovative representational strategies to appeal to the reader’s sense of self or even selves” and concludes that, while feminine subjectivity remained a site of negotiation for magazine readers, nonetheless, “*Feminina* encouraged its readers to communicate a self educated in the nuances of personal taste linked to the feminine toilette” (74). Berry focuses her analysis on the periodical’s discussions of design and decoration and illustrations of readers’ display of self, and in this way, like Starr, touches on consumption, taste, and identity. Ultimately, the *Journal*, much as *Feminina* did with decorational choices, represents its readership as articulating its consumer identity through the selective choice of reading material.

Mr. Mabie’s “Literary Talks,” as I explored in Chapter Three, offer the most consistent representation of the *Journal* readership as consuming readers. He demonstrates, for instance, the differences between those who embark on a course of reading without forethought and those, like his readers, who learn to make critical selections. Mabie offers descriptions of un-critical readers who “read the books which come their way instead of putting themselves in the way of getting the right books. They

buy and borrow without thought or plan because they do not understand that reading ought to be a resource as well as a recreation" (May 1902, 17). Concluding that "the chief difference between men does not lie in the difference of opportunity but in difference of ability to recognize an opportunity when it appears," Mabie teaches his readers how to "recognize" literary opportunities, working on the assumption that as *Journal* readers they are already savvy consumers (17). He warns *Journal* women about the population of readers "without critical judgment" who have negatively influenced the literary market that they must now navigate by making more responsible selections, describing "an immense constituency of uneducated readers, without critical judgment, ignorant of the standards of art and bent on entertainment simply, has come into existence and has made the trade of writing books . . . extremely profitable" (Oct. 1903, 15).

Mabie makes clear that being an intelligent consumer can be challenging, as even "the most expert judges are often misled by a novelty of thought or form which simulates originality" (15), but implies, in suggesting how his readers might avoid such mistakes, that his readers are capable of becoming "expert judges" of the literary marketplace. In this respect, Mabie situates *Journal* readers as representing intelligent literary consumers and yet always in need of the magazine's services to become a better consumer. In *A Magazine of her Own? Desire and Domesticity in the Woman's Magazine 1800 – 1914*, Margaret Beetham examines magazines as vehicles for constructing definitions of femininity, arguing that it is "always represented in magazines as fractured, not least because it is simultaneously *assumed as given and still to be achieved*. Becoming the woman you are is a difficult project for which the magazine has characteristically provided recipes, patterns, narratives and models of the self" (17; emphasis mine). In just

such a way the *Journal* illustrates female readers as already embodying a consumer self, but also as continuously interacting with the magazine in order to further define that role. In addition, Mabie speaks, at times pointedly, to the fact that his readers, as educated consumers, have many opportunities and much “capital” that should frame the role they take as household consumers and managers of the family library and children’s reading; he identifies the “great unused educational capital” of “men and women of culture and some leisure” that might be put to use in educating younger, less well-read individuals (Sept. 1903, 15).<sup>38</sup> Mabie urges such readers to consider leading reading groups for young people so that “one or more persons whose education has been in advance of those about them turn their capital to the advantage of their less fortunate neighbors” (15); Mabie then offers *Journal* readers a few guidelines in leading such groups, presuming members of his readership to be those with some of that “capital.” In this way, too, that the *Journal*, like the *Bazar*, links the identity their audience assumes as readers and writers with the assumption of cultural capital.

*"He Writes Clear and True": Farmer Writers*

Farming periodicals are, of course, equally concerned with their readers’ ability to communicate effectively with members of their communities; however, for these magazines, the literacy identity offered to readers is less emphatic about social relationships and more focused on writers as active contributors to their profession. In his extensive survey of 19<sup>th</sup>-century magazines, *A History of American Magazines, 1865-1885*, Frank Luther Mott connects the growth in the number of farming periodicals, and their popularity, with the rise of farmers’ granges in the 1870’s. In particular, he

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<sup>38</sup> Features such as “Education at Home,” “Teaching a Little One to Read,” “Before They go to School,” and “Edward Howard Grigg’s Talks: Moral Training of the Child” speak to mothers, representing them as pivotal actors in nurturing children’s literacy and, of course, selecting appropriate reading material.

attributes the growth of the agricultural press to increased public interest in exploring new farming technologies. *Maine*, *Ohio*, and the other farm journals discussed in Chapter Four certainly situate themselves as educational mediums. They exhort readers to participate in their periodical as they would in their local granges and, in doing so, suggest that as writers for the agricultural press they take on the same identity they already possess as active grange members. Thus, editors at farm journals such as *Maine* and *Ohio* frame the act of composing an article for the magazine as parallel to speaking to the grange: the goals for communication are the same, and the language used ought to be similar as well; their readers possess the skills and knowledge necessary for participating in grange work, and should transfer these same skills to the task of submitting an article. The editors make clear, moreover, that they should use the resources made available to them through the grange – newspapers or letters, reading material for meetings, and books from grange-based libraries – as material for writing to the *Farmers*. Ultimately, as writers, readers are asked to assume the identity of a professional farmer engaging in “talk over the fence” with other professionals.

Numerous articles within the magazines report on grange meetings and outline the ideal values and attitudes of grange farmers – values and attitudes repeated in articles aimed at writing for the press. In “Educational and Social Responsibilities of the Grange,” S. J. Hawes reminds readers that true grange members take an active role in meetings, rhetorically positioning herself and the reader as members of the same professional community: “if we take only a little time between the stated meetings to study, read and think about the subjects that are presented, we shall find that we are interested and better prepared to understand and discuss them” (8). She further argues

that members have a responsibility to act as speakers and teachers, admonishing reluctant readers that: “when our Worthy Lecturer expects us to be prepared to read a paper on any given subject, we do not think of trying to avoid it. Instead, we try to express ourselves to the best of our ability, knowing that our friends will be lenient in their criticism” (8). Hawes and others assert that the grange is in large part an educational organization, and in describing the participatory responsibilities of members, further urge readers to become knowledgeable speakers and teachers in the grange movement, roles editors also ask them to take on as writers. G. P. Lewis, in the *American Agriculturalist*, for example, defends the instructive benefits of the agricultural press, asserting that “the observations and experience of many intelligent, practical farmers, who have hitherto remained silent, would be a valuable addition to our agricultural literature, and of incalculable benefit to their co-laborers” (“Farmers Should Write,” 371).

To further encourage reluctant writers – and promote the visibility farmers who had taken up the role of contributor in a professional journal – farm journals paired representations of grange farmers with descriptions of journal contributors, making clear that the two were, in fact, the same. The *Ohio Farmer* boasted that it had surpassed all other periodicals in “hunting up men and women unknown as writers, and making them known in tens of thousands of farm houses through the value of their writings” (“King’s English,” 103). In fact, an 1893 article, “A Few Facts” advertises the number of farmers writing for the journal; it claims to have the largest list of paid contributors of any farm periodical, and state that: “our books show 157 names of writers with whom we keep a regular book account, paying them for contributions, most of whom we have ‘discovered’ and many of whom are now widely known” (142). *Ohio* makes certain, in fact, that the



identity of the farmer writer is “widely known” and actually published articles introducing their contributors through biographies and photographs. In one issue, “Some of Our Contributors,” the images of ten men appears at the top of the page, with a number accompanying each face and corresponding to the biographies offered below. The profiles often touch on the contributor’s education, but focus more specifically on his “style of farming” and professional participation – “He is master of his local grange, and a great worker in farmers’ organizations” – and, at times, something about his writing – “He began writing for agricultural papers when requested to describe the methods by which he realized so much money out of celery. His writings are practical and interesting” (373). Although profiles offer praise – “he is a clear and attractive writer” or “he always writes from practical experience” – editors are more concerned with ensuring readers are “made acquainted” with a diverse group of farmers specializing in difference crops and regions, but who are alike in their identity as writers and agricultural professionals (374).<sup>39</sup>

Articles, such as those examined in Chapter Four, that provide readers with advice on composition, grammar, and appealing to the agricultural press also provide prospective writers with an identity as *Farmer* contributors. Features, such as “The Neglected Tool,” that emphasized the responsibility farmers have to contribute to their communities and profession by writing for the press, offer illustrations of the kind of farmer (and reluctant writer) editors wish to cultivate. Here, the editor explains that “these old, veteran farmers who have never written a word for agriculture, have accumulated from many years’ experience and observation, a fund of practical

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<sup>39</sup> Importantly, too, *Ohio* also offers images and profiles of its female “Household Writers.” These profiles mirror their male counterparts: education, farm and household experience, and writing are included in the biographies.

knowledge and information,” and then describes one such “old, veteran” farmer: “not long since we were conversing with a practical fruit grower . . . now, his *talk* was practical, useful, interesting, and his writing would have been equally so” (369). At the same time, articles focused on grammar, brevity, and clarity, such as “The Editor’s Pencil,” overtly illustrate the kind of thought processes a successful writer needs to adopt in order to write effectively for the agricultural community: “we long to make every writer for our columns feel this: ‘what I am now writing will be seen by nearly a quarter of a million pairs of eyes. If because I do not write clearly, condense properly . . . if I thus waste one minute of the time of each reader, then I have caused a total loss of 150 days” (24).

More often, however, articles such as “Editor’s Pencil” and “Neglected Tool” simply point to the knowledgeable farmer and grange participant who represents their ideal writer, and reinforce this illustration by negative example – spending more time outlining the identity and attitudes of the “class” of farmer who would not assume the role of contributor to his profession. In “Farmers Should Write for the Agricultural Press,” for instance, the editor catalogues resistant responses to the growth of agricultural papers – what detractors referred to as “book farming” or “paper farming.” He outlines three “classes” of farmers who object to the idea that journal contributors should come from actual farming communities, claiming that the first class are “averse to innovation” and do not like “new fangled notions,” the second class were from a young age taught the art of farming and did not place value in books, and the third class are those who object on a mistaken belief about the identity of the agricultural writer – “on the ground that the contributors are mainly scientific or theoretical men,” a prejudice the editor uses the rest

of the article to dispel (1). Reader-contributors supported editorial depictions of the kind of farmer who would refuse to contribute to the press and, by extension, his profession. “Writing for the Public” offers a comparison of the habits and attitudes of older farmers and young, “book farming” farmers. The writer, Red Oak, a “book farmer” himself, characterizes “young farmers full of vigor and enthusiasm” who feel called to write out of a desire to share knowledge and explore innovative techniques, whether or not they will guarantee success (1). Oak goes on to offer an illustration of the farmer who will not write, characterizing him as one who is not invested in the professionalization of farming: “behold another class. There are men who call themselves farmers, who not only deride the agricultural press . . . but actually hold the profession or business in contempt” (1). Oak further explains that the reason “the great residue of intelligent, experienced class of farmers” do not write is “[b]ecause in most cases *they can’t*; that is, they are generally men of but little education and not practiced in the art of giving ready expression to their ideas” (1).

### *Mentors for Literacy*

Here and throughout the farm periodicals it is clear that not being “practiced in the art of giving reading expression” to ideas does not mean that farmers are not “intelligent, experienced.” Because their definition of literacy values content and contribution over mechanics, editors of farm periodicals are able to demonstrate that no anxiety or stigma should be attached to poor literacy skills. In fact, editors are careful to ensure readers understand that they should not be ashamed of a lack of schooling, poor grammar, or difficulties in reading and writing; readers are reminded that the *Farmer* contributor excels in content rather than style. Importantly, in arguments like that of Red

Oak which address those farmers resistant to “book farming,” writers for and editors of farm journals suggest that the problem is not basic illiteracy itself, but rather not being concerned for the success of other farmers or being too critical of mistakes made by writers. The resolution, then, always centers on the recalcitrant farmers’ willingness to join a discussion – not on their need to acquire better literacy skills. Especially for *Ohio* and *Maine*, the ability of a farmer to read or write is not the issue, as much as is their ability to contribute to professional conversations – an ability farming periodicals attempt to argue is dependent entirely on willingness to adopt the role of a mentor in a community of professionals.

Although *Harper’s Bazar* and *Ladies Home Journal* approach the topic of illiteracy differently – the *Bazar* connects the issue to its discussion of club work and training domestic staff, and the *Journal* ignores the matter entirely – it is clear that both magazines’ treatment of illiteracy is, as with the farm journals, a product of their construction of a literacy identity for readers. For, ultimately, all these magazines construct identities that allow readers to exert some degree of authority in particular communities. Although contributors to *Ohio* and subscription saleswomen for the *Journal* are paid for their efforts, editors do not expect readers to acquire better jobs or any measurable income by adopting their prescribed reading and writing habits. What readers gain instead is social capital, as ultimately magazines offered a way to participate in the agricultural profession, or club life, or the literary market, and a method of becoming a mentor to farm colleagues and women.

Significantly, as well, the magazines’ discussions both of their readers’ ideal literacy practices and, much more rarely, of the lack of literacy in others contribute to the

editors' portrayal of farmers defining a profession or of women in exploring their identity as middle-class Americans. For the *Journal*, prolonged considerations of basic illiteracy in others simply do not fit into the magazine's construction of a literary marketplace – either in its own pages through the correspondence columns or in its illustrations of the publishing business. The literacy efforts of the *Journal* are focused on helping women see themselves as savvy consumers and marketers in their reading and writing experiences, and correspondingly does not portray illiterate persons as having a place in such interactions. The *Bazar*, on the other hand, although for the most part equally unconcerned with questions of illiteracy, race, and immigration, prompts its readers to imagine themselves as clubwomen, mentoring one another in intellectual endeavors and collaborating on local social issues. Thus, in the *Bazar*, in one of a handful of articles discussing illiteracy, immigration, and domestic help, the writer outlines the work of New York women's clubs in generally promoting the local history of the city and, more specifically, of educating the children of immigrants and initiating them in forming clubs of their own ("Women's Work for their Cities," 466). Here, and in a few articles such as "A Social Need," the *Bazar* does take notice of the connection between immigration and illiteracy, but also acknowledges that this is important because "women, . . . more than men, are held responsible for the morals of a people" and carefully frames its audience as capable of becoming mentors, not just to other women, but to others' children ("Immigration," 1347). The *Bazar* devotes the greatest amount of space to outlining the identity of the American clubwoman, but, in places such as these, does also demonstrate how this identity can be positioned against others – in this case, immigrant and lower-income populations.

Similarly, almost all other considerations of immigration in the *Bazar* are relegated to the many discussions of servants. Quite obviously propagating racial and cultural stereotypes, articles such as “A California Housekeeper on Chinese Servants” argue that hard-working and intelligent immigrants often make up the domestic help workforce employed by the *Bazar* audience. Here, and in ongoing columns such as “Mistress and Maid,” middle-class women in general and *Bazar* readers in particular are positioned as possible mentors to un-educated, or more specifically un-trained, laborers. Importantly, while immigrants and other low-income workers may be classed in contrast to the intellectual club-women of the *Bazar*, the magazine does at times suggest that illiteracy on its own cannot be used to define morality or “value,” as in “Women and Men: The Alphabet as a Barrier.” Here, the *Bazar* traces the history of women and literacy before turning to recent discussions of immigration, asserting that “all this may not prove much, but it is enough to indicate that the value of a citizen or of an immigrant is not easily measured by the alphabet” (438). *Bazar* women assert their identity as clubwomen and mentors not through literacy as it is defined in census records or immigration tests, but by the adoption of contextually-situated practices.

The farming periodicals go even further in addressing what they see as national or “generally believed” arguments about literacy and criminality, and work to make clear that their journals do not recognize a connection between illiteracy and immorality. In “Does Education Tend to Promote Morality,” S. H. Ewell, anticipating the arguments of contemporary literacy scholars such as Harvey Graff, offers the premise that “it is generally believed, without reason or argument, that all education tended to make people more moral” and then provides a statistical analysis of why illiteracy has no influence on

crime rates (411). Citing national population and crime statistics, Ewell ultimately centers his argument on the local context, noting that “so far from education [and a ten-year educational campaign] in Detroit lessening crime, it has increased more than four-fold” and ultimately asserting that “a person may have unlimited education . . . but if he is not born with the elements of honesty in him, he is not to be trusted” (411). Other articles do address concerns over the regulation of education, but also acknowledge, as in the 1888 “The Educational Bill,” that “we do not underestimate the evils of illiteracy, but there are moral evils which no education can eradicate” and, in the 1884 “Will Education Do All?,” that “illiteracy is not at the bottom of all our woes[; s]ome of the most cultured people that ever lived upon the face of the earth have been the most wicked” (2; 2).

Through such articles, the farm journals acknowledge that illiteracy or a lack of schooling can prevent men from participating responsibly in their local governments and professions, but remind readers that education does not define morality. Instead, editors place the greatest emphasis on further supporting education so that farmers can assume their roles as active contributors to journals and, thereby, mentors to young farmers.

Similarly, articles that discuss the educational benefits of farm journals and organizations, and importance of writing for them, not only frequently assure readers that they should not be afraid to make grammatical mistakes or “hesitate to write because he has not been educated at college” (“Farm Experience”), but also make clear that they do not deride the success and intellect of illiterate farmers. In “Agricultural Education Not a Success,” Henry Voorhees questions the methods of education in agricultural colleges and critiques state funding of universities, but in doing so he also expresses the idea mirrored in other articles that morality and agricultural expertise are not always

dependent on literacy and higher education, for “who has not often seen the best paying farms, and finest improved, managed by very illiterate men? . . . I wish sometimes the College would send a professor to learn something from them” (Voorhees, 80). It is obvious, in these places, that what editors mean by illiterate may or may not be the ability to read or write a name, but rather that they lack enough education to make them confident enough to write for agricultural publications and thereby act as mentors to other farmers. Like the *Bazar*, the farm publications concern themselves with how their readers will assume a position within a community of contributors, not with any individual reading and writing skills.


In this way, the literacy identities offered by these journals contribute to a broader illustration of the complexity and diversity of literacy constructions operating at the turn-of-the-century. Despite their occasional acknowledgement of other depictions of literacy and morality, these magazines do not rely on autonomous interpretations of literacy, but instead formulate their own definitions, convincing readers at the same time that the practices, ideologies, and identities promoted by the editor more accurately reflected their lifestyle. Although the *Bazar*, the *Journal*, and the farm periodicals presented unique constructions, ultimately they all recognize what more recent scholars examine: that being literate demands different skills and goals in different contexts. That this belief appears in such a diverse group of magazines and is accepted by all the magazine readers who ultimately participated in their periodicals only further demonstrates that our more current social theories of literacy have a long history. Certain writers, at least, were prepared to deconstruct the “literacy myth” well before Graff and other literacy scholars investigated the topic. Considering how magazine editors and contributors formulated



constructions of literacy that moved beyond the definitions of census records and the practices of academic institutions offers a more complete picture of how readers and writers have outlined literacy communities and made the habits of reading and writing meaningful to their sense of self.

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### EDUCATION:

M.A. in English, University of Louisville, May 2007

Culminating Project: "Close Not the Grave of the Injured Charlotte Temple":  
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### PUBLICATIONS:

"'I must have my gossip with the young folks': Letter-Writing and Literacy in Boys' and Girls' Magazine and Fireside Companion." Accepted with revisions at *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*.

"'Groupies and Singletons': Student Preferences in Classroom-Based Writing Consulting." *Young Scholars in Writing: Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric* (Fall 2004): 46-55.

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

"Literacy by Subscription: Turn-of-the-Century Composition and *The Ladies' Home Journal*." Conference on College Composition and Communication. St. Louis. March 2012.

"Harry Potter Joins Facebook: Discoursal Identities, Fan Culture, and Networked Publics." Computers and Writing. Ann Arbor. May 2011.

"The 'Quare Women's Journals': Revising 19<sup>th</sup>-century Educational Narratives." Kentucky Philological Association Conference. March 2011.

"From Facebook to Freshman Comp: Transferring Online Discourse to Academic Thesis." Computers and Writing. May 2010.

“Where Are They Now?: A Longitudinal Look at the Writing Centers Research Project Survey.” Conference on College Composition and Communication. Louisville. March 2010.

“‘I have no appetite’: The Rhetoric of Fasting and Food Consumption in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction and Visual Culture.” Louisiana Conference on Language, Literature, and Culture. March 2009.

“The Snake that Swallowed the Toad: Desire and Consent in Wolfe’s Anti-Fascist Text.” Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900. Louisville. March 2007.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE:

Assistant Director of Composition. University of Louisville (2010 – 2011).  
Mentored new graduate teaching assistants, coordinated the Symposium of Student Writing and Book Fair event,

Assistant Director of the University Writing Center. University of Louisville (2009 – 2010).  
Mentored graduate writing consultants, co-facilitated the Virtual Writing Center, maintained and updated the University Writing Center website and online writing tutorials, and conducted faculty workshops.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Louisville. 2006 – 2011.  
Courses designed and taught:  
    Introduction to College Composition  
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Writing Center Consultant , University of Louisville. 2005 – 2006.  
Assisted undergraduate and graduate students with writing in face-to-face and online e-mail sessions.

Writing Center Consultant, Grand Valley State University. 2003 – 2004.  
Tutored undergraduate students in face to face sessions in the center itself, and also directed group review sessions in writing classrooms.

#### WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED

*Celebration of Teaching and Learning; Technology Café Instructor*

Workshop for instructors of all disciplines on using technology in the classroom,  
February 2012

*Symposium of Student Writing Workshop*

Pedagogy workshop for composition faculty and teaching assistants, February  
2011

*Making Writing Assignments “Work” in Your Online Course*

Cross-discipline faculty workshop supported by the Delphi Center, March 2010

*The Virtual Writing Center and Your Course*

Workshop for faculty attending Delphi Center’s Celebration of Teaching and  
Learning, February 2010

*Designing Theses in Research Writing*

Workshop for undergraduate Sociology majors, Fall 2009

*APA Citation*

Workshop for undergraduate Sociology majors, Fall 2009

ACADEMIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Executive Officer, English Graduate Student Organization. University of Louisville.  
2008 – 2010.

Co-Chair, Louisville Conference Graduate Reception. 2008 – 2010.

Graduate Student Representative to the Faculty Committee. 2006 – 2007.

Reviewer of manuscripts, *Young Scholars in Writing: Undergraduate Research in  
Writing and Rhetoric*. 2005 – 2009.

Reading Tutor. EveryOne Reads. Jefferson County Public Schools. 2007 – 2008.